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THESIS

THE UNITED STATES, VIETNAM, AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST

by

John G. Karas

March 1981

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The United States, Vietnam, and the National Interest

by

John G. Karas
Lieutenant, United States Navy
B.A., Arizona State University, 1972

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

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I. INTRODUCTION

The study of a nation's foreign policy is usually concerned with its goals and interests as they relate to other states in the international system. Each state is expected to formulate and implement its foreign policy in a way that reflects that nation's national interest.

The major problem facing the student of international relations is the lack of a model or conceptual framework for analyzing the plethora of information that oft times is available. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to develop an operational framework and definition for the concept of the national interest--a concept of primary importance in the study and analysis of foreign policy.

Although the concept of the national interest is central to the study of a nation's foreign policy, it is a term that is replete with multiple uses and definitions. Since its meaning is often vague and imprecise, the term many times proves more confusing than not. Much of this confusion and criticism of the concept stems from the expectation of its usefulness as an analytical tool. Be that as it may, states do have interests, and they do pursue them. When properly understood the concept of the national interest not only aids in the understanding of a nation's foreign policy but is indeed necessary.

A. CRITICISMS

Some of the criticisms of the concept of national interest are that it is imprecise, rationally undefinable, static, and always subject to more than one interpretation. An example of the criticisms leveled against the concept of the national interest is presented by James Rosenau. Writing in the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, he notes that this concept has been used as an analytical tool and as a prescription for political action.

> As an analytical tool, it is employed to describe, explain, or evaluate the sources or the adequacy of a nation's foreign policy. As an instrument of political action, it serves as a means of justifying, denouncing, or proposing policies. Both usages, in other words, refer to what is best for a national society. They also share a tendency to confine the intended meaning to what is best for a nation in foreign affairs.[1]

Rosenau notes that the national interest is rooted in values. When it is utilized to describe political action it "lacks structure and content," and it "confounds the efforts of its users" when it is used as an analytical instrument. Although the concept lacks preciseness which confounds the political analyst, it does prove useful to the political actor when thinking about foreign policy goals and in rallying popular support for his policies.[2]

According to Rosenau, some of the reasons for the failure of the concept as an analytical tool are related to four areas: (1) the problem of what constitutes a

nation; (2) the interests that should be considered; (3) the difficulty in determining the existence of interests; and (4) the lack of procedure for cumulating the interests once they are known. There is also the uncertainty of knowing whether the national interest is simply the sum of the various individually expressed interests, or whether it is greater than the sum of its parts.[3]

In the opinion of James Rosenau, both the objectivists and the subjectivists are unable to provide any objectively verifiable content to the national interest. The political realists (objectivists), led by Hans Morgenthau, define a nation's interests in terms of power. They see power as an end in international relations. Rosenau argues that one cannot think in terms of power alone, with no regard for values, in determining a nation's foreign policy goals. In Rosenau's opinion power is a concept as elusive as interest. Values are not only involved in cumulating power but they are also involved when deciding how to use that power.[4]

On the other hand the subjectivists, those who deny that the quest for power alone can determine the national interest, are faced with the task of identifying the various interests in a society, relating specific interests to specific policies, and of aggregating the specific interests into a meaningful whole. They tend to assume that these tasks are performed within the decision-making

process. The subjectivists are, therefore, accepting a procedural definition of the national interest with all of its inherent weaknesses.[5]

In conclusion Rosenau notes that the national interest "has little future as an analytical concept." He does not believe that enough preciseness can be attained to make the term a useful research tool. The concept will require further study, though, because it will continue to be used by political actors and scholars.[6]

Rosenau and many other scholars have approached the concept of the national interest from a limited perspective or have asked too much of the concept. He and other authors have overlooked how the idea of the national interest does aid in understanding the development and execution of foreign policy.

With this in mind the remainder of the chapter will be devoted to the ideas of Donald E. Neuchterlein to develop an operationally meaningful framework and definition for the national interest.

B. THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Donald E. Neuchterlein in his book, National Interests and Presidential Leadership: The Setting of Priorities presents the most credible and analytically meaningful framework for studying the concept of the national interest.

Neuchterlein makes certain qualifications about the usage of certain terms prior to his attempt to define the national interest. First, he assumes that "the leaders of nation - states act rationally in the pursuit of state objectives." By this he means that the policies the leaders follow are believed to work towards the greater well-being of their people, "whatever the constitutional system." The problems of cost-effectiveness, wiseness or morality not withstanding, it is simply assumed that some degree of reasoning is used in making foreign policy decisions. Second, he assumes that "the number of persons involved in deciding national interests will vary from state to state, depending on the type of government." In societies that are generally free and democratic, a large body of people from both the private and public sector of society exert degrees of influence on issues that could become vital interests. In states that are totalitarian in nature the number of people who can exert such influence are far fewer in number.[7]

Once these qualifications have been considered the next step is defining the national interest. "The national interest is the perceived needs and desires of one sovereign state in relation to the sovereign states comprising its external environment."[8] Neuchterlein recognizes that some aspects of this definition need to be elaborated on:

> First, we are talking about the perception of state needs, which suggests that decisions about the national interest are the result of a political process in which a country's leaders ultimately arrive at a decision about the importance of a given external event or crisis to the country's well-being. It is also clear that this definition pertains only to fully sovereign states, not to international organizations or dependent territories...This definition also draws a distinction between the external and the internal environments of states; the way in which a government deals with the internal environment of the state is usually referred to as the public interest. Finally, this definition implies that we are talking about the interests of the nation-state in its entirety, not the interests of private groups, bureaucratic entities, or political organizations within the state.[9]

A simple definition of the national interest is important, however, by itself it does not offer the policymaker or the scholar the operationally meaningful framework required in the determination of national interests. Neuchterlein recognizes this important fact and provides "additional definitions of the basic interests of nation-states--those national needs that form the underpinnings of their (the policymakers) foreign policies."[10] The other definitions Neuchterlein provides are as follows:

1. defense interests: the protection of the nation-state and its citizens against the threat of physical violence directed from another state or against an externally inspired threat to its system of government

2. economic interests: the enhancement of the nation-state's economic well-being in relations with other states

3. world order interests: the maintenance of an international political and economic system in which the nation-state may feel secure and in which its citizens and commerce may operate peacefully outside its borders

4. ideological interests: the protection and furtherance of a set of values that the citizens of a nation-state share and believe to be universally good.[11]

Several comments need to be addressed in reference to these basic national interests. First of all, the order in which they are represented does not conote a sense of priority or hierarchy, however, it seems obvious that without a proper defense of the nation-state and the people that make up the nation-state, the other basic interests are not of much use. A second point is that the four basic interests "are not mutually exclusive" and require that tradeoffs between them be made by policymakers. Examples of this abound such as the nationalization of American industries by host countries. Generally in these cases the American government has sacrificed these interests in an effort to strengthen our world order interests.[12] In terms of international raw materials, United States policymakers have willingly allowed foreign states to nationalize American owned industries, provided just compensation were received, if they felt the stability of said regime was in the world order interest of the United States.[13] A third point is that "a nation's ideology is an important part of

its national interest." A final point to be made when discussing the four basic interests deals with defense interests. As envisioned by Neuchterlein it "entails only the protection of the homeland, the citizens and the political system" of the country and does not include alliance systems with other countries.[14]

Neuchterlein has devised a very utilitarian categorization of the intensity of the four basic interests. Those categories are:

> 1. Survival issues: when the very existence of a nation-state is in jeopardy, as a result of overt military attack on its own territory, or from the threat of attack if an enemy's demands are rejected . . . . By this definition, probably no economic, world order, or ideolgical issues qualify; only defense interests, as defined above, would reach this level of intensity . . . .
>
> 2. Vital issues: When serious harm will very likely result to the state unless strong measures, including the use of conventional military forces, are employed to counter an adverse action by another state or to deter it from undertaking a serious provocation . . . . Unlike survival issues, a vital matter may involve not only defense interests but also economic, world order, and in some cases ideological interests . . . .
>
> 3. Major issues: When a state's political, economic, and ideological well-being may be adversely affected by events and trends in the international environment and thus requires corrective action in order to prevent them from becoming serious threats (vital issues). Most issues in international relations fall into this category and usually are resolved through diplomatic negotiations.

4. Peripheral issues: When a state's well-being is not adversely affected by events or trends abroad, but when the interests of private citizens and companies operating in other countries might be endangered . . . .[15]

Now that we have looked at the four basic interests and have devised an intensity scale, the next step in the formulation of an operationally meaningful framework of the national interests must be addressed. A set of value factors and cost/risk factors must be applied that are useful for all four basic interests and that provide a means of assessing the intensity of those interests, i.e., whether the interest is survival, vital, major or peripheral. However, prior to proceeding with a look at these value factors and cost/risk factors an illustration of how policymakers can use the four basic interests and the intensity scale discussed above is shown below.

Chart 1.1[16]
NATIONAL INTEREST MATRIX

Country:	Issue:			
Basic Interest at stake	Intensity of interest			
	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of homeland				
Economic well-being				
Favorable world order				
Ideological				

It is recognized that the highly utilitarian matrix shown on page 17 and the operationally meaningful framework thus far discussed is not a very scientific method of analyzing behavior in international politics. It is, however, designed to provide the decisionmaker with a much better method of analyzing those things that motivate states. This framework is not only useful for one's own country but it is also very useful for analyzing those nations that comprise its external environment.

With this in mind we will turn our attention to the value factors and cost/risk factors mentioned previously.

Historically there have been many instances where nation-states have found their vital interests threatened. If neither side feels there is any room for compromise then a conflict becomes a distinct possiblity. Due to the nature and capabilities of many nations to rain total devastation on one another it becomes imperative for policymakers to carefully calculate not only their own country's stake on a given issue or set of issues but also the stake of their antagonist. A failure to do just that could eventually lead to gross miscalculation and armed conflict. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 is a good example of such miscalculation that brought the world to the brink of war.

Both the State Department and the Defense Department seek to be systematic in their analysis of potential crises, and their recommendations attempt to take into account all the relevant information which impact on a given crisis. However, in light of the serious miscalculations by the planners of these departments in such cases as the Vietnam war and the Cambodian incursion, serious questions must be raised about their analysis.

Professor-Neuchterlein has listed sixteen factors he considers essential to a clear and in depth analysis of the national interest. Most of the factors listed on page 20 apply to the four basic national interests: defense of homeland, economic well-being, favorable world order, and ideological.

The fourth and final step to be taken in the development of an operationally meaningful framework of the national interest is to make the values and costs listed in chart 1.2 significant to the policymaker. When discussing important foreign policy issues, policymakers need a method of assessing the values versus the costs. Such a method is provided by Professor Neuchterlein in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire's system is set up on a numbering system ranging from one to ten with one representing a low value or cost and ten representing a high value or cost. The questionnaire is shown on page 21.

Chart 1.2[17]

Essential Factors for Determining Vital Interests
Value Factors
Proximity of the danger Nature of the threat Economic stake Sentimental attachment Type of government Effect on balance of power National prestige at stake Policies of key allies
Cost/Risk Factors
Economic costs of hostility Estimated casualties Risk of protracted conflict Risk of enlarged conflict Cost of defeat or stalemate Risk of public opposition Risk of U.N. opposition Risk of congressional opposition

Chart 1.3[18]

Questionnaire:
Determination of Vital Interests

Values

_____ Proximity to danger
_____ Nature of the threat
_____ Economic stake
_____ Sentimental attachment
_____ Type of government
_____ Effect on balance of power
_____ National prestige at stake
_____ Policies of key allies

Costs/Risks

_____ Economic costs of hostilities
_____ Estimated casualties
_____ Risk of protracted conflict
_____ Risk of enlarged conflict
_____ Cost of defeat or stalemate
_____ Risk of public opposition
_____ Risk of U.N. opposition
_____ Risk of congressional opposition

Degree of concern for each factor

Very high	9-10
High	6-8
Medium	3-5
Low	1-2

This questionnaire is primarily concerned with determining whether an interest is vital or major in its intensity. If the cost/risk factors outweigh the value factor then in all likelihood the interest is major and diplomatic negotiations should be pursued. However, if the value factors exceed the cost/risk factors then the

interest is vital in nature and may very likely require the employment of conventional military force. In the case where the cost/risk factors approximate the value factors then serious diplomatic negotiations should be pursued. Pending the outcome of these negotiations, the issue at hand should be continuously updated and re-analyzed in an effort to determine whether the issue is a vital interest or a major interest.

As stated earlier, the method presented in this chapter is not a scientifically precise method of computing the national interest of a nation-state. It is, though, a systematic approach to evaluating the values and costs that policymakers ought to consider in order to produce better policies and to avoid the possibility of miscalculation. The art of foreign policy remains just that: an art, however, the method of analysis presented in this chapter will enable the policymaker to better perform his task.

C. CONCLUSIONS

The importance of the national interest concept in analyzing state behavior makes it necessary to develop both an operational framework and a definition for the concept itself. The ideas of Professor Neuchterlein make it possible to do this. The importance of this approach to

the concept of the national interest is in recognizing that there is no one, over-all national interest for any state. The national interest of a state must be evaluated and determined in each individual situation by weighing the values and costs.

By using Neuchterlein's conceptual framework, as presented in this chapter, American policy in Vietnam will be analyzed starting with the Presidencies of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman and culminating with a look at the Carter Presidency. The last chapter will present a recommended policy for the future.

II. ROOSEVELT AND TRUMAN

A. ROOSEVELT

Power politics is what first caused President Roosevelt to become involved with the subject of Indochina.

In the 1930s when Japan seized Manchuria and northern China, and thus closed the "open door" of equal rights for all foreigners in terms of commercial exploitation, the United States continued its traditional policy of verbal defense of China's territorial integrity.

In 1939 and 1940 the President began to turn the economic screws on Japan through a policy of denying them oil and scrap metal wherever possible. At the same time Roosevelt saw a threat to the Philippines emerging as Japan continued its conquests southward into Indochina and the Spratly Islands.

Throughout this period President Roosevelt had to be extremely cautious that he not get too far ahead of American public opinion on the subject of involvement in the "gathering storm." However, on December 7, 1941 Japan struck the American Naval base at Pearl Harbor thrusting the United States into World War II. Over the next several weeks Japan launched a rapid drive that consumed most of Southeast Asia.

During the first year-and-a-half the President was dedicated to the gearing up of America for war while trying to check Japanese, Italian and German advances wherever possible. However, in the back of his mind he was developing a new plan for France's colonial possessions in Asia--trusteeship.

President Roosevelt first broached the idea of trusteeship for the governance of Indochina in March 1943 during a visit to Washington by the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden.

At the Teheran Conference in November 1943 the future of Indochina was discussed by Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt. In an effort to gain Stalin's support on other important issues, Roosevelt took the position that Indochina should not be restored to the French in the post war era. Stalin agreed with Roosevelt's position, he did not feel that the allies should shed their blood to restore French colonial rule in Indochina.[19] Both Roosevelt and Stalin were of the opinion that the native Indochinese were far worse off as a result of decades under French colonial rule and that anything would be better than continued French dominance.

Churchill quickly came to the aid of the French on this issue. He sought the quick restoration of France's former status as a world power.

As a result of this British opposition coupled with that of the French on the issue of trusteeship for Indochina, Roosevelt did not fight to have this idea incorporated into any official documents, and by mid-1944, Roosevelt's official policy was that Indochina should be placed under a trusteeship only with French concurrence.[20] This modified position was reinforced when, with the approval of Roosevelt, Secretary of State Stettinius on April 3, 1945 issued a statement based on the results of the Yalta Conference. According to this statement, trusteeship would be an acceptable arrangement to the United States only for "territories taken from the enemy," and for "territories as might voluntarily be placed under trusteeship."[21]

Roosevelt died a scant two months after the Yalta Conference and for the next four and one-half years Indochina would be of secondary importance to the United States. Would the American position have been different if Roosevelt had lived? This is surely a matter of conjecture, however, given his distrust of the French, "it is conceivable that he might have decided to back Ho Chi Minh, who in the spring of 1945 was maneuvering his Viet Minh forces into a position where they could claim to be the chief pro-allied group in Indochina."[22]

B. TRUMAN

When Truman ascended to the Presidency on April 12, 1945 he was faced with many difficult decisions. Although he favored independence for Indochina, this matter was of secondary importance to him. His primary concerns in the early months of his Presidency dealt with finishing the war against Japan and Germany and he was faced with the enormously difficult decision on the use of the atomic bomb against Japan.

As it had throughout World War II, the United States in the immediate postwar era continued to pay primary attention toward Europe. It was in the European area where Washington began to feel that the expansion of Soviet power was most dangerous. It was also in Europe, which had a highly developed economic and industrial base, that Washington felt its aid could be readily absorbed. On the other hand, Asia with its mainly agrarian base seemed almost helplessly backwards.[23]

When the priorities on Asia were determined at the end of World War II, Southeast Asia was given the next to lowest priority. The reasoning behind this lay in the fact that, with the exception of Thailand, the nations making up Southeast Asia were politically tied to one or another of the European powers. Thus, by the fall of 1945, the Truman Administration decided that it could not afford

to add Indochina to its growing list of Far Eastern problems. However on October 27, 1945, President Truman delivered a speech in which he dealt with the problem of independence for colonial peoples. Truman stated:

> We believe in the eventual return of sovereign rights and self-government to all peoples who have been deprived of them by force....
>
> We believe that all peoples who are prepared for self-government should be permitted to choose their own form of government by their own freely expressed choice without interference from any foreign source. That is true in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, as well as in the Western Hemisphere....
>
> We shall refuse to recognize any government imposed upon any nation by the force of any foreign power....[24]

The significance of this statement by President Truman lay in the fact that he does not speak of immediate indpendence but only of the "eventual" return of sovereignty and "self-government," thus he did not rule out the possiblity of a French protectorate over Vietnam.

It is clear that in the immediate postwar time-frame Washington was sympathetic to the cause of Vietnamese independence, however, it considered the economic rehabilitation and political independence of France far more important.

America's attitude towards Vietnam between 1945 and 1949 is perhaps best summed up by George M. Kahin and John W. Lewis in their book The United State in Vietnam.

> Until the end of 1949 the United States displayed little, if any, real interest in Indochina. It occasionally urged the French to take steps towards granting independence to these areas, but its urging was mild and restrained. Washington was apprehensive lest any pressure it exerted in this regard might adversely affect France's attitude toward cooperating with it in the formation of European defense alliances, which in the postwar years received the highest priority among the United States' strategic objectives.[25]

Two major events in 1949 and one major event in 1950 marked a principal shift in American policy towards Indochina. The events of 1949 were the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on the fourth of April and the proclamation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October first. The significant event of 1950, of course, was the outbreak of the Korean War in which Communist Chinese volunteers were introduced.

The shift in American foreign policy began to unfold when it became evident that the fall of China was imminent. A National Security Council study in June 1949 states in part:

> The extension of communist authority in China represents a grievous political defeat for us; if Southeast Asia also is swept by communism we shall have suffered a major political rout the repercussions of which will be felt throughout the rest of the world, especially in the Middle East and in a then critically exposed Australia.[26]

After the fall of China the United States began to press the French to grant independence to the Associated States. On February 2, 1950 the French government

ratified Vietnamese independence in the French Union. This event was quickly followed by American recognition of the Bao Dai government on February 4, 1950. Thus, the stage was set for the beginning of the American aid program.

The objective of American foreign policy, as it began to unfold in 1949, was the containment of communism by encircling it with a series of anti-communist military alliances.

A National Security Council study in June of 1949 singled out the Soviet Union as the main enemy.

> For the foreseeable future, therefore, our immediate objective must be to contain and where feasible to reduce the power and influence of the USSR in Asia to such a degree that the Soviet Union is not capable of threatening the security of the United States from that area and that the Soviet Union would encounter serious obstacles should it attempt to threaten the peace, national independence or stability of the Asiatic nations.[27]

Southeast Asia was the perceived target of Soviet subversion. In consonance with its policy of containment, the United States wanted the nations of Asia, particularly India, the Philippines, and Pakistan, to take the lead in facing this problem. The United States recognized that as a Western power it would be disadvantaged if it tried to assume the lead.

While the objective of American foreign policy was the containment of "communism," the perceived threat was

embodied in the domino theory. Even before the outbreak of the Korean War the domino theory dominated American thinking. A National Security Council memorandum stated:

> It is important to United States security interests that all practicable measures be taken to prevent further communist expansion in Southeast Asia. Indochina is the key area of Southeast Asia and is under immediate threat.
>
> The neighboring countries of Thailand and Burma could be expected to fall under Communist domination if Indochina were controlled by a Communist-dominated government. The balance of Southeast Asia would then be in grave hazard.[28]

With the outbreak of the Korean War, however, China replaced the Soviet Union as the major threat to Southeast Asia.

> The loss of any of the countries of Southeast Asia to communist control as a consequence of overt or covert Chinese Communist aggression would have critical psychological, political and economic consequences.[29]

The French were quick to react to this significant shift in American foreign policy. Paris endeavored with considerable success to convince Washington that the French campaign in Vietnam was in effect sustaining the American policy of containing communism. Thus, with Washington's new priorities, France's position in Vietnam was now presented in terms of the Free World's stand against communist expansion rather than being perceived primarily as a local colonial conflict.

With America's recognition of the Bao Dai government Ho Chi Minh sought and received diplomatic recognition from

China, Russia, and the Eastern bloc countries and thus Vietnam was linked to the cold war and regarded as an area of strategic importance to the United States.

With this in mind, in February 1950 President Truman approved a program of military and economic aid that by the time of the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu was to exceed 80% of the French war effort. This military and economic aid program was followed by a Mutual Defense Agreement that was signed in December 1950 by representatives of the French, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Lao, and American governments.

An important point needs to be addressed at this juncture. The American involvement in Indochina was not begun on solid footing. Bao Dai was not a strong capable leader. In essence he was a puppet of the French will. France continuously refused to grant Vietnam total and unconditional independence which was, according to American officials, absolutely necessary as an incentive for them to fight. Whereas Bao Dai was weak with little popular support, Ho Chi Minh on the other hand was perceived, by a large segment of the Vietnamese population, as nationalistic and patriotic, and the French policy in Vietnam did nothing to counter Ho's appeal.

In addition to this,

> The United States and France were pursuing objectives that were not wholly compatible. The United States was primarily interested in the containment of Communism while the French were trying to preserve their colonial position. The United States did not enter the conflict in Indochina...because we approved of what they (the French) were doing, but because we need their support for our policies in regard to NATO and Germany. Truman and Acheson wanted French ratification of the European Defense Community. In Indochina itself, the U.S. wanted the French to fight the war until victory was achieved, and then we wanted the French to leave. France, on the other hand, certainly was not fighting just to leave once victory was attained.[30]

C. CONCLUSIONS

In assessing President Roosevelt's policy on Indochina one would have to see it in terms of the global setting. President Roosevelt felt that the French, as a colonial power had done more harm than good to Indochina. During the war the President had been known to feel that the United States had gotten involved in the Pacific War because of the shortsighted greed of the French, the British and the Dutch. This sentiment coupled with his reserve towards DeGaulle and America's stated policy of self-determination for all peoples led him to propose an international trusteeship for Indochina. This position, although still a personal belief of President Roosevelt, was modified after a relatively favorable visit to Washington by General Charles DeGaulle in July, 1944 and also as a result of the then present invasion of allied

forces onto the continent of Europe. The allied invasion of France had enabled DeGaulle's Committee of National Liberation to transform itself into a Provisional government of France. Thus in terms of Indochina world events played into France's hands.

In the first four and one-half years of the Truman Administration the American policy towards Vietnam was essentially one of neutrality. Although he favored independence for Vietnam, the President was too pre-occupied with events in Europe, Japan and the Philippines. However, the events of 1949 and 1950 quickly changed the focus of American attention. The Communist victory in China's civil war and the Korean War precipitated a major shift in American foreign policy. This shift in American foreign policy was embodied in the policy of containment predicated on the evolution of the domino theory.

In looking at our model, Trumans's new policy would probably look like the chart on page 35.

As stated in chapter one, a vital interest requires strong measures that could include conventional military force. In Korea we did use conventional military force under the auspices of the United Nations. In Indochina the conventional military forces were already in place under the French banner. From mid-1950 to the French debacle at Dien Bien Phu America provided 80% of the financial burden of the first Indochina war.

Chart 2.1
NATIONAL INTEREST MATRIX-TRUMAN

Country: U.S.	Issue: Vietnam			
Basic Interest at stake	Intensity of Interest			
	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of homeland			X	
Economic well-being			X	
Favorable world order		X		
Ideological		X		

America's national interest from mid-1950 to the end of President Truman's term in the White House can best be summarized as follows:

> The American national interest, as defined by the Truman Administration, was threatened by Communism. Communism was an expansive ideology, and if the countries which espoused it were not contained, American policy-makers feared it would spread like a cancerous growth until the United States itself was directly threatened. Communism was a threat, both objectively and psychologically, to American security interests. Objectively, the Soviets were second only to the United States in military power, and their ideology made the United States their most important enemy. Psychologically, there was the danger of people in the free world feeling that Communism was the wave of the future. This could lead to either war or accommodation, both of which were unacceptable to the United States.[31]

Thus, the outcome of the Chinese civil war and the war in Korea caused a complete reversal of United States priorities in Indochina, a reversal which would affect American foreign policy for over two decades.

III. THE EISENHOWER YEARS

A. 1953 TO GENEVA

When President Dwight D. Eisenhower came into office on January 20, 1953, his administration reviewed the political situation in Southeast Asia and the former administration's policy. The basic guidelines of United States policy, formulated by President Truman and Secretary of State Acheson, were accepted by President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

During the Presidential campaign in 1952 the Truman Administration's Asian policies had been subjected to fierce political attacks for having lost China to the Communists. Also during the campaign, Eisenhower had promised to end the Korean War. Cognizant of these facts, Secretary of State Dulles was determined to avoid such kind of attacks from being leveled at the new administration.

Once the armistice was signed in Korea in June, 1953, both Eisenhower and Dulles turned their attention to the situation in Indochina. Both men feared that the Korean armistice would lead to an expansion of the Chinese role in Indochina. Almost immendiately after the signing of the armistice

> there were reports that the Chinese were transferring large quantities of arms to southern China and Vietnam and expediting their training and reequipment of the Viet-Minh forces.[32]

In light of this the Eisenhower Administration took the position that it was more important than ever for the French to carry on the struggle against the Viet Minh.

In August 1953, in one of the first expressions of the domino theory, President Eisenhower predicted that Burma, India, and Indonesia would be in immediate danger if the communists were triumphant in Indochina. There were strong domestic pressures favoring American involvement in Indochina led by those Republicans who had carried the attack against Truman for losing China and joined by those who had supported McCarthy's anti-communist witch hunt in congress. However, Eisenhower, fully aware of public opinion, was not in favor of yet another land war in Asia.

As the political situation in Indochina continued to deteriorate in 1953 and 1954,

> the President was increasingly faced with the dilemma of not wanting to become militarily involved yet continuing to support programs predicated upon the oft-stated strategic importance of Vietnam as a keystone in the defense of the free world.[33]

The President opposed replacing the French role with American forces and was also opposed to a French pullout. He devised a policy that would (1) increase support for the French; (2) increase the efforts to build a Vietnamese

National Army; and (3) exert efforts to form a collective security arrangement for Southeast Asia. Within the framework of this policy, the President increased aid to the French in their war effort, attempted to induce them to grant a greater degree of independence to the Associated States, and he sought allied support in the building of a security arrangement. This policy proved unsuccessful because despite increased aid, the French were being defeated, they were reluctant to grant greater independence to the Associated States, and those states envisioned as allies in a security arrangement were either unwilling or unable to participate in the struggle for Indochina. Thus, the Eisenhower Administration was faced with the difficult decision of American unilateral intervention.

The document that essentially described American perceptions of its interests in Southeast Asia was NSC 177, "U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia," of January 16, 1954. NSC 177 left no doubt that Communist control of Vietnam would critically endanger American security interests in Southeast Asia. It stated:

> The successful defense of Tonkin is the keystone of the defense of mainland Southeast Asia, except possibly Malaya. In addition to the profound political and psychological factors involved, the retention of Tonkin in friendly hands cuts off the most feasible routes for any massive advance towards central and Southern Indochina and Thailand.[34]

NSC 177 also went on to say that not only will Southeast Asia be threatened by the alignment of Tonkin in the Communist camp but also that if Southeast Asia goes Communist this "would threaten the U.S. position in the Pacific offshore island chain and would seriously jeopardize fundamental U.S. security interests in the Far East."[35] In expounding on the importance of Vietnam for U.S. policy in Asia, NSC 177 stated:

> The loss of Southeast Asia would have serious economic consequences for many nations of the free world and conversely would add significant resources to the Soviet bloc. Southeast Asia, especially Malaya and Indonesia, is the principal world source of natural rubber and tin, and a producer of petroleum and other strategically important commodities. The rice exports of Burma, Indonesia, and Thailand are critically important to Malaya, Ceylon, and Hong Kong and are of considerable significance to Japan and India, all important areas of Free Asia. Furthermore, this area had an important potential as a market for the industrialized countries of the free world. The loss of Southeast Asia, especially of Malaya and Indonesia, could result in such economic and political pressures in Japan as to make it extremely difficult to prevent Japan's eventual accommodation to Communism.[36]

NSC 177 not only saw Vietnam as a domino it also attached importance to it in the context of the Cold War:

> In the conflict in Indochina, the Communist and non-Communist worlds clearly confront one another on the field of battle. The loss of the struggle in Indochina...would therefore have the most serious repercussions on U.S. and free world interests in Europe and elsewhere.[37]

Thus, we see that NSC 177 lists Vietnam not only as important in the form of a domino affecting Southeast Asia

and beyond but also as a significant factor in the Cold War confrontation between East and West. Because of this importance, the document provided the following objective of American policy:

> Objective: To prevent the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the Communist orbit; to persuade them that their best interests lie in greater co-operation and stronger affiliations with the rest of the free world; and to assist them to develop toward stable, free governments with the will and ability to resist communism from within and without and to contribute to the strengthening of the free world.[38]

After producing this document, the National Security Council formed a special working group headed by General Erskine to assess conditions and ramifications of American intervention in the ground war in Vietnam. The report essentially concluded that it agreed with the position of NSC 177 but that the costs and risks of U.S. ground forces in Vietnam were nearly unacceptable.

With these factors in mind, the President and the Secretary of State mulled over the possiblity of using force in Indochina. On March 20, 1954 French General Paul Ely stunned American officials when he warned that without a substantial aid increase the French would lose at Dien Bien Phu before the opening of the Geneva Convention. Strong and intensive debate ensued in United States Administration circles. Admiral Radford proposed a plan that called for massive air strikes around Tuan Giao in order to save the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu. This

matter was heatedly debated in the National Security Council and then presented to Eisenhower. After discussions with Congressional leaders it was determined that intervention would have to be done in consonance with allied support, particularly Great Britain, the French would have to accelerate the independence of the Associated States, and Congress would have to provide a declaration of war.[39] None of the conditions laid out by the President were met.

In early April 1954, Secretary Dulles proposed the formation of an anti-communist alliance in hopes of internationalizing the Indochinese War and persuading the French to stay on until victory could be achieved. This position infuriated British Foreign Secretary Eden, who felt that Dulles was trying to torpedo the upcoming Geneva Conference on Korea, Indochina, and so on.

On April 21 the situation at Dien Bien Phu was desperate and the French asked the United States to reconsider the Radford plan, but to no avail. Thus, at 1730 on May 7, 1954, General Navarre ordered a cease fire at Dien Bien Phu.

Throughout this period the Administration struggled with the situation in Indochina. The conflict between ends and means became more acute:

> The ends of American policy in Asia, as iterated by State, Defense, the NSC, and the White House, clearly would be threatened by a Communist victory

in Vietnam. But the means required to attain those ends were perceived as entailing costs and risks approaching unacceptability.[40]

B. THE GENEVA CONFERENCE

While the battle for Dien Bien Phu raged on, the Geneva Conference opened. Originally the conference was only scheduled to discuss a settlement of the Korean War, etc., however, at the February 1954 meeting of the Big Four in Berlin, it was decided to include Indochina on the agenda. Due to a lack of any agreement with the Communists during the Korean part of the conference, Secretary Dulles was convinced no agreement would be reached on the Indochina question.

Before the opening of the conference the United States opposed any action that would weaken the French will to continue the war through to military victory.

Under pressure from the right wing of the Republican party, the Eisenhower Administration made an effort to disassociate itself from any agreement that did not live up to American objectives. A National Security Council Meeting on May 8 produced the following statement of United States policy.

> The United States will not associate itself with any proposal from any source directed toward a cease-fire in advance of an acceptable armistice agreement, including international controls. The United States could concur in the initiation of negotiations for such an armistice agreement. During the course of such negotiations, the French and the Associated

States should continue to oppose the forces of the Viet Minh with all the means at their disposal. In the meantime, as a means of strengthening the hands of the French and the Associated States during the course of such negotiations, the United States will continue its program of aid and its efforts to organize and promptly activate a Southeast Asia regional grouping for the purpose of preventing further expansion of Communist power in Southeast Asia.[41]

As the conference opened, the United States sought to develop a united negotiating position with its allies. In a meeting in Washington between 24 June and 29 June, Churchill, Eden, Eisenhower and Dulles hammered out the "Seven Anglo-American Points." The points, listed below, were forwarded to the French for acceptance, which was given.

1. Preserve the integrity and independence of Laos and Cambodia assures the withdrawal of Vietminh forces therefrom.

2. Preserve at least the southern half of Vietnam, and if possible an enclave in the delta; in this connection we would be unwilling to see the line of division of responsibility drawn further south than a line running generally west from Dung Hoi.

3. Does not impose on Laos, Cambodia, or retained Vietnam any restriction materially impairing their capacity to maintain stable non-communist regimes; and especially restrictions impairing their right to maintain adequate forces for internal security, to import arms and to employ foreign advisors.

4. Does not contain political provisions which would risk loss of the retained area to Communist control.

5. Does not exclude the possibility of the ultimate reunification of Vietnam by peaceful means.

6. Provides for the peaceful and humane transfer, under international supervision of those people desiring to be moved from one zone to another.

7. Provides effective machinery for international supervision of the agreement.[42]

These seven points gave tacit recognition of the possibility of the partition of Vietnam.

Throughout the conference the Russians and the Chinese exerted a restraining influence that enabled the reaching of a successful agreement. The Russians wanted to "induce the French to stay out" of the European Defense Community by moderating Vietminh demands. The Chinese wanted peace for "her domestic program for economic development" and her new foreign policy approach that reached full bloom at the Bandung Conference in 1955. China also wanted to "avoid giving the U.S. any pretext for introducing forces on her southern flank." The Vietminh wanted to negotiate a settlement that could "avoid further deaths and material destruction."[43] The French, under the new Prime Minister Pierre Mendes-France, sought a way to extricate themselves from the war as gracefully as possible, particularly after the defeat at Dien Bien Phu.

As the conference was drawing to a close, Eden tried to persuade the United States, particularly Dulles, to be present at the signing. The United States adamantly refused but did allow Bedell Smith to attend the closing

session where only verbal adherence would take place. Secretary Dulles succinctly stated the American position when he said that even "if the settlement conformed to the Anglo-American principles which had been agreed to in Washington, the United States still could not sign it."[44] Thus, neither the United States nor the State of Vietnam adhered to the Final Declaration.

Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith made a unilateral declaration on behalf of the United States. Mr. Smith stated that the United States would,

> refrain from the threat or use of force to disturb them (the agreements)....view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security.[45]

The most important feature of the agreement was embodied in the Final Declaration, paragraph 7. It stated that "...general elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of an international commission...."[46] It was this provision that convinced the Vietminh to agree to the rest of the agreement. They felt that when the elections were carried out they would win and thus unify Vietnam under communist rule. (The impact of paragraph 7 will be looked at in section D of this chapter).

Even though the final accords closely replicated the seven points agreed to by the United States, in private American officials saw the conference as a "major defeat for United States diplomacy." Another piece of territory

had been lost to the Communists, (Vietnam north of the 17th parallel) and to the National Security Council this was

> a serious loss for the free world, the psychological and political effects of which will be felt throughout the Far East and around the globe.[47]

Secretary Dulles, on July 23, told a news conference that "military developments in Indochina and the disinclination of the French people to prolong the war led to a settlement containing many features we do not like." But the important thing, he said, "was not to mourn the past but to seize the future opportunity to prevent the loss of Northern Vietnam from leading to the extension of Communism throughout Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific."[48] This statement was not only a reiteration of the domino theory but also it implicitly recognized the need for a Southeast Asian security arrangement.

President Eisenhower issued a statement in which he stressed that the United States had not been a belligerent and that the "nations" which did the fighting had the "primary responsibility for the settlement." He noted that "the United States has not itself been party to or bound by the decisions taken by the Conference." On the other hand, the President called attention to the formal declaration of Bedell Smith at Geneva, hoped that the settlement would lead to peace "consistent with the rights and the needs of the countries concerned," and frankly asserted that much

depended on how the settlement worked in practice.[49] As it stood, if the agreement did not work out, the United States had not committed itself to anything which would prevent it from coming to the aid of the Saigon government.

The significance of the Geneva Accords of 1954 was great indeed. Their impact on world affairs was to reverberate for the next two decades. This impact is best described in the following statement:

> The Geneva Accords of 1954 marked both the end and the beginning of an historic series of events shaping U.S. policy toward Vietnam. It marked the end of French primacy in the politics of Vietnam, and the beginning of direct U.S. participation in the struggle to keep the emergent Republic of Vietnam alive.[50]

C. SEATO AND U.S. INTERESTS

With the outbreak of the Korean war the United States first envisioned a broad collective security arrangement for the Far East. At this point in history the United States had to settle for a series of treaties which included Japan, Australia and New Zealand, the Philippines, and later Korea. Just prior to the opening of the Geneva Convention, the United States once again attempted to create a collective security arrangement in hopes of strengthening France's position at the bargaining table. This attempt, like its predecessor, failed.

The main reason the United States was pursuing a collective security organization was to defend against

Communist aggression and expansion. This position was eloquently stated in NSC 5429, "Review of U.S. Policy in the Far East," on August 20, 1954. The preface of this document stated:

> The loss of prestige in Asia suffered by the U.S. as a backer of the French and the Bao Dai Government will raise further doubts in Asia concerning U.S. leadership and the ability of the U.S. to check further expansion of Communism in Asia. Furthermore, U.S. prestige will inescapably be associated with subsequent developments in Southeast Asia.[51]

NSC 5429 went on to encourage a Southeast Asian security treaty with the United Kingdom, France, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, and the United States. NSC 5429 noted that the overall national interest of United States policy remained the maintenance of world peace and order in which United States national security would not be jeopardized by successive Communist gains in Asia which could strategically and economically isolate the United States.

The results of the Geneva Convention had taught Secretary of State Dulles two valuable lessons. First, collective defense should be organized before aggression was in progress, and second, popular support was imperative in fighting Communist subversion.[52]

On September 6, 1954, a meeting was held in Manila by the nations listed above. Two days later the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty creating SEATO was concluded.[53]

The treaty entailed some distinctive aspects that bear mentioning. First of all the protocol to the treaty designated Laos, Cambodia, and "the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam" as areas which fall under the protection of the treaty. This was written in this manner because inclusion of these states, as signatories, would have been a violation of the Geneva Agreements. Secondly the treaty deals with aggression "in a way other than armed attack." Under this condition the signatories agree to consult to determine which measures should be taken for the common defense. The significance of this is that it is not an obligation for action but only an obligation for consulation. Even in the event of armed attack, the treaty simply calls for each state to "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes."

America's interest in SEATO was,

> ...to offset the weakened position of the West in Indochina and to serve as a major barrier against any further spread of Communist political power. (Dulles) saw it as an international agreement providing a cloak of protection for Cambodia and Laos against aggression by Communist powers and for insuring that the Viet Minh be inhibited from establishing control over the rest of Vietnam, with its authority permanently confined north of the 17th parallel.[54]

In effect the United States used SEATO to offset the results of the Geneva Accords, and viewed it as a link in a system of alliances along the Sino-Soviet periphery designed to contain Communism.

As the United States became more heavily committed in Southeast Asia in 1954, what did it see of value in this area of the globe? (1) "The United States had to bear in mind the effect of Southeast Asia on American friends with deep interests in the area;" (2) The strategically significant Straits of Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok were the gateways from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean; (3) Southeast Asia was a "stepping stone" from China to Australia; (4) The commercial seaport and "significant naval base" of Singapore; (5) "Indochina, as the record of Japanese military penetration indicated, was an important key to Southeast Asia"; (6) The military bases of the Philippines; (7) Economically Southeast Asia produced 60% of the world's tin and around 90% of its natural rubber, also "it produced 2.5% of the world's total" petroleum output, mostly from Indonesia and Brunei; and (8) "Burma, Thailand and Indonesia have traditionally been the rice bowl of Asia...."[55] Thus, the value of Southeast Asia to the United States in 1954 reflected various interests, particularly the denial of its resources, military value and its people from the Communist block.

D. THE 1956 ELECTIONS

In section B of this chapter we mentioned paragraph 7 of the Final Declaration which called for elections in July 1956. Since these elections were not held, one must address the question, why?

Although there is a great deal of evidence that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) did expect the elections to be held, they were not held because of the resistance of the South Vietnamese government supported by the United States.[56] We should remember that the Government of Vietnam did not sign the Accords, in fact they disassociated themselves from them. According to The Pentagon Papers the Geneva Accords bind France's successor to the provisions of the military agreement, not to the Final Declaration which contained the provisions for the election.[57]

Diem's position was that the elections could not be held because he believed a free vote was impossible in both the north and the south. In the north because of the nature of the regime and in the south because the presence of armed guerrillas would thwart the true choice of the people.

Washington's position was much more realistic in its assessment as to why the elections could not be held.

> Under the Geneva Agreements the Administration could foresee the toppling of the first domino in the forthcoming Vietnamese elections.[58]

The reasons for this are as obvious today as they were in 1956. Whereas Ho Chi Minh was looked upon as patriotic and nationalistic with a great deal of popular support, Ngo Dinh Diem was not perceived as such. He knew that even in a relatively free and honest election he would lose

decisively. Secondly, as a result of the signing of the SEATO treaty the United States had stated its intent to preserve the southern part of Vietnam (to be referred to as South Vietnam) from coming under the Communist control.

E. THE DIEM REGIME

Ngo Dinh Diem was appointed Prime Minister midway through the Geneva Conference by Chief of State Bao Dai. The Commander in Chief of Bao Dai's army was General Nguyen Van Hinh. About six months after Diem's appointment, the French transferred full sovereignty to the Bao Dai-Ngo Dinh Diem Administration.

In September, 1954 the United States began dealing directly with Diem and in February of the following year began training a South Vietnamese army. America's support for Diem wavered during his first year in office, however, after successfully dealing with the religious sects, his own army, and the Binh Xuyen, a gangster group controlling Saigon's police, brothels, and gambling, America's support firmed up. This firming position was stated by Secretary Dulles in the Spring of 1955.

> Diem is only means U.S. sees to save South Vietnam and counteract (the) revolutionary movement underway in Vietnam. U.S. sees no one else who can. Whatever U.S. view has been in the past, today U.S. must not permit Diem to become another Kerensky.[59]

In April of 1955 Bao Dai tried to check Diem's rise in power. He ordered Diem to come to France where it was

believed he would be dismissed. With American backing, Diem defied Bao Dai's orders and in October successfully organized a referendum that led to his election as head of state. Three days after the referendum he proclaimed The Republic of Vietnam with himself as its President.

From the onset of his reign, Diem ruled in an unbending autocratic fashion trusting no one except his immediate family.

As provided for in the Geneva Accords, large numbers of people moved north or south. Many of those coming south were the tightly knit northern Catholics who feared religious persecution from the Communists.

> ...the arrival of that tightly knit community in a South Vietnam that is largely Taoist, spiritualist, and Buddhist created a new political tension there--the more so as the government of President Ngo Dinh Diem immediately used the northern Catholics as its major base of political power....[60]

This action by Diem led to the alienation of the southern intellectuals.

The United States began pouring in huge quantities of economic and military aid designed to keep the Diem regime on its feet. The problem was that the economic aid rarely if ever touched the lives of South Vietnam's preponderantly rural populace,

> Only a small percentage of U.S. aid was devoted to education, health, agricultural and industrial development, and related areas that could have improved the peoples living conditions.[61]

Between June and August 1956, Diem issued a number of decrees that abolished the elected village council, which had been the backbone of the rural structure for a long time, and replaced them with appointed government officials. In a matter of days Diem had managed to break the autonomy of the villages with government appointed officials who were "usually out of touch with their problems...."[62] Diem not only eliminated the old village council system, but also impinged on the lands that were occupied by the Montagnards.

Many of the peasant tenants, who for nine years of colonial war had worked their lands relatively freely, were now required to not only pay taxes but were also required to pay rent to landlords who sat safely in Saigon.

Under pressure from the United States, Diem, between 1956 and 1958 introduced some agrarian reforms. These reforms did not succeed in countering the widespread resentment that had built up and were ineffective in gaining peasant allegiance.

In mid-1955 Diem began wholesale reprisals against the Vietminh whether they were communist, non-communists, or were mere sympathizers. This resulted in tens of thousands of people being jailed, killed, or forced to go underground. In essence Diem used these measures as a pretext to

eliminate all of his foes. In January 1956 Diem issued Ordinance No. 6 which gave his government authority to eliminate all opposition. By 1959 the scope of the repression had been expanded and on May 6, 1959 Law 10/59 was passed which legalized repression.

All of Diem's repressive measures combined with his near total alienation of the South Vietnamese people "provided insurgent groups with a major issue by which to advance their cause."[63] In a few short years Diem had managed to alienate the southern intellectuals, the rural populace, the peasant tenants, the Montagnards, and had managed to destroy the social structure of the rural society.

During this timeframe the United States, though initially uncertain of Diem's ability to consolidate power, nevertheless took the initial steps of support for his regime in late 1954. Despite a National Intelligence Estimate of August, 1954 which stated that

> although it is possible that the French and Vietnamese, even with firm support from the U.S. and other powers, may be able to establish a strong regime in South Vietnam, we believe that the chances for this development are poor and, moreover, that the situation is more likely to continue to deteriorate progressively over the next years....[64]

President Eisenhower signalled United States support in his October 23, 1954 message to Diem. The President's message read:

> We have been exploring ways and means to permit our aid to Vietnam to be more effective and to make greater contribution to the welfare and stability of the Government of Vietnam. I am, accordingly, instructing the American Ambassador to Vietnam to examine with you in your capacity as Chief of Government, how an intelligent program of American aid given directly to your Government can serve to assist Vietnam in its present hour of trial, provided that your Government is prepared to give assurances as to the standard of performance it would be able to maintain (in undertaking needed reforms) in the event such aid were supplied.[65]

This American decision to provide economic aid, which between 1954 and 1959 totalled $1,222.5 million, indicated America's decision to build a sovereign South Vietnam where none had existed before Geneva. In conjunction with this, the United States, after the French withdrawal in 1956, reorganized the Military Assistance Advisory Group under a new U.S. command, and built up the Vietnamese military establishment. The military was streamlined from 250,000 men to 150,000 men and was provided with $85 million per year in new equipment, and a 40,000 man Self Defense Corps and a 50,000 man Civil Guard were created. The major problem with the reorganized South Vietnamese Army was that it was designed along the lines of the South Korean Army, that is, it was designed to fight a conventional war and was not trained in anti-guerrilla tactics. The primary mission assigned to the South Vietnamese Army was to maintain internal security, however, with the departure of the French forces in 1956 it was decided that the "only

way to attain a military balance in Vietnam was...the development of a dual-mission South Vietnamese Army."[66]

As a result of an NSC meeting on June 7, 1956, a new policy statement, NSC 5612 "U.S. Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia," emerged and it remained U.S. policy for the remainder of the Eisenhower Administration. At the meeting of June 7, President Eisenhower stated;

> ...it would be desirable for appropriate U.S. military authorities to encourage Vietnamese military planning for defense along lines consistent with U.S. planning concepts based upon approved U.S. policy (and) to discreetly manifest in other ways U.S. interest in assisting Free Vietnam in accordance with the Manila Pact (SEATO), to defend itself against external aggression.[67]

This shift in America's support for the Diem regime from qualified support to virtually unqualified support is best understood in light of the political and military developments which occurred in South Vietnam. As mentioned earlier, the foremost reason for this shift in policy was attributed to Diem's ability to consolidate power by eliminating the Binh Xuyen and by breaking the armed resistance of the religious sects. This coupled with his victorious election over Bao Dai looked very favorable to American policy-makers.

Other factors which created optimism was the pledge of African and Asian leaders at the Bandung Conference to live together in peaceful coexistence, the abatement of the Quemoy and Matsu crisis, and in August 1955 the

American and Chinese ambassadors to Poland began periodic talks.[68] At the same time the DRV was experiencing domestic difficulties and suffering large grain shortfalls which were seen as diminishing the possiblity of conducting aggression against the South. In 1956 there were reports of provincial unrest in Nam Dinh and Nghe An and industrial growth was slow.[69] On the other hand, the United States felt that the formation of SEATO offered great potential for containing Communism. All of these factors combined produced very optimistic assessments of the viability and survivability of the Diem regime and these factors were credited to America's wise policies, pursued since 1954. This optimism, displayed by American leaders, was to be short lived as the year 1960 began to dawn.

F. 1960

During the late 1950s the Eisenhower Administration did not face any serious challenges in Vietnam. The optimistic assessments of Diem's ability to meet the American conditions of determination and willingness to maintain independence and oppose external aggression continued unabated through 1959.[70] On May 26, 1959 a National Intelligence Estimate stated:

> South Vietnam's 136,000-man army, supported by Civil Guard, the Self-Defense Corps, and the police services

> is capable of maintaining effective internal security except in the most remote jungle and mountain areas.[71]

These and other indicators, such as decreasing military and economic aid obligations, continued the optimism of the Eisenhower Administration.

However, in 1960 the numbers of terrorist acts and the numbers of Viet Cong (Vietnamese Communists) guerrillas increased dramatically. Is it any wonder why a guerilla-type insurrection did not evolve sooner in light of the repressive policies of the Diem regime discussed in section E. Two factors should be noted as to why. First, was the "thoroughness and stringency of Diem's widespread repression," and secondly, was "Hanoi's unwillingness to encourage armed resistance to Diem's regime."[72]

American policy-makers noted three sources of anti-Diem activity in mid-1960. These were the Viet Cong, infiltrators from the North, and non-Communist disaffected Southerners. The Viet Cong were considered the greatest threat to the Diem regime. By late 1960 there was little doubt that a serious Anti-Diem movement had emerged in South Vietnam. As this opposition to Diem mounted, there was some dispute in official government circles as to the role of the North. Although some characteristics of a civil war were present, The Pentagon Papers attributed the insurrection to the North.

> The evidence supports the conclusion, therefore, that whether or not the rebellion against Diem in South Vietnam proceeded independently of, or even contrary to directions from Hanoi through 1958, Hanoi moved thereafter to capture the revolution. There is little doubt that Hanoi exerted some influence over certain insurgents in the South throughout the years following Geneva, and there is evidence which points to its preparing for active support or large-scale insurgency as early as 1958.[73]

Many noted Southeast Asian scholars refute this point. George M. Kahin and John L. Lewis in their book, The United States in Vietnam state:

> ...all available evidence shows that the revival of the civil war in the South in 1958 was undertaken by Southerners at their own--not Hanoi's initiative... it rose at Southern initiative in response to Southern demands.[74]

In fact it was not until September 1960 that the Lao Dong Party in North Vietnam sanctioned formation of a United Front in the South. On December 20, 1960 a National Liberation Front of South Vietnam was formed and on January 29, 1961, Hanoi publicly recognized it.

Thus we see two views emerging as to the cause of the aggravated security situation in South Vietnam. The first view attributes the cause to Communist aggression directed from the North and the second view attributes the cause to Southern disaffection caused by the political weakness of the South Vietnamese Government. In retrospect one would have to conclude that although the North eventually gave its backing to the Southern movement, in order not to lose their influence in the South, the prime cause of the

stepped up aggression was the Diem regime's political activities. Unfortunately official Washington chose to ignore these facts or at least refused to admit them because to do so would have undercut the very cornerstone of justification for United States military involvement in the South and subsequent escalation of the war against the North.

As the year 1960 drew to a close, the situation in South Vietnam was the worst it had been since Geneva. This difficult situation was going to be left to a new Administration to handle and on January 20, 1961, John F. Kennedy, the 35th President, took the helm.

G. CONCLUSIONS

As with the last couple of years of the Truman Administration, the Eisenhower Administration felt that Communism had to be contained. The spread of Communism was seen as a threat to American security, and the nature of this threat was best conveyed through the use of the domino theory. The loss of Vietnam, according to official American policy, would cause undue harm to United States prestige and lead to Communist gains elsewhere in the world.

Because of the expansionist nature of Communism, if Vietnam fell other countries in Asia would be in danger which, in turn, would effectively weaken America's worldwide strategic position. Not only would America's

worldwide strategic position be weakened but the loss of the natural resources of Southeast Asia and the loss of the potential markets for American goods would prove costly to the United States and the West. Thus, as a result Vietnam was perceived as a vital American interest.

Using our model presented in Chapter One, the outlook of the Eisenhower Administration would look like this:

Chart 3.1
NATIONAL INTEREST MATRIX-EISENHOWER

Country: U.S.	Issue: Vietnam		
Basic Interest at Stake	Intensity of Interest		
	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of homeland			X	
Economic well-being			X	
Favorable world order		X		
Ideological		X		

During the Eisenhower Administration the United States, rather than send in American ground troops, opted to build a South Vietnamese Army, supplied with American equipment, to defend itself. Coupled with this, the United States was the driving force behind the formation of SEATO which was seen as an effective way of containing Communist expansion.

The importance of Vietnam to America's interests was succinctly stated by President Eisenhower in an address on April 4, 1959. The President stated in part that:

> Strategically South Vietnam's capture by the Communists would bring their power several hundred miles into a hitherto free region. The remaining countries in Southeast Asia would be menaced by a great flanking movement. The freedom of 12 million people would be lost immediately and that of 150 million others in adjacent lands would be endangered. The loss of South Vietnam would set in motion a crumbling process that could, as it progressed, have grave consequences for us and for freedom.
>
> Vietnam must have a reasonable degree of safety now--both for her people and for her property. Because of these facts, military as well as economic help is currently needed in (South) Vietnam.
>
> We reach the inescapable conclusion that our own national interests demand some help from us in sustaining in Vietnam the morale, the economic progress, and the military strength necessary to its continued existence in freedom.[75]

IV. KENNEDY'S THOUSAND DAYS

A. THE EARLY JOHN F. KENNEDY

> Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to ensure the survival and the success of liberty.[76]

These were the words spoken by the man who, on January 20, 1961, became the 35th President of the United States. When he came into power John F. Kennedy had some rather definite concepts on Vietnam and the nature of Communist guerrilla warfare. Those concepts had been forged by his 1951 visit to Vietnam and by his years as a senator from Massachusetts.

During his 1951 visit Kennedy was deeply impressed by the need for the development of a nationalistic sentiment to thwart Communism. Upon his return he stated:

> To check the southern drive of Communism makes sense but not only through reliance on the force of arms. The task is rather to build a strong native non-Communist sentiment within these areas and rely on that as a spearhead of defense rather than upon the legions of General DeLattre. To do this apart from and in defiance of innately nationalistic aims spells foredoomed failure.... Without the support of the native population, there is no hope of success in any of the countries of Southeast Asia.[77]

Kennedy's views on the need for a nationalistic base of support were evidenced throughout his years in the Senate and later in the White House.

During the 1954 Dien Bien Phu crisis, Kennedy was an outspoken opponent of further American military support for the French. His reasoning dealt primarily with the lack of support in evidence for the French from the peoples of Vietnam, In one instance he stated:

> I am frankly of the belief that no amount of American military assistance in Indochina can conquer an enemy which is everywhere and at the same time nowhere, an enemy of the people which has the sympathy and covert support of the people.[78]

Thus when Kennedy became President he was not unfamiliar with Vietnam, He strongly believed in the need to establish a base of popular nationalistic support and also recognized that the nature of guerrilla warfare was such that a new and different approach in combating it was needed. This new and different approach was to take the form of counterinsurgency which will be addressed in section C of this chapter.

Kennedy was also imbued with the need to contain Communism. He felt the spread of Communism was a threat to American security believing deeply in the domino theory. This view was reflected in an address delivered in 1954 wherein he stated:

> Vietnam represents the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia, the keystone to the arch, the finger in the dike. The fundamental tenants of this nation's foreign policy (depended) in considerable measure upon a strong and free Vietnamese nation.[79]

B. THE INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE

> ...there are many people in the world who really do not understand, or say they do not, what is the great issue between the free world and the Communist world. Let them come to Berlin. In the world of freedom, the proudest boast is--ich bin ein Berliner.[80]

With those words President John F. Kennedy left no doubt as to the nature of the international challenge. The challenge he faced weighed heavily upon him and influenced the way he pursued his policy in Vietnam.

In April 1961, the CIA-directed effort to oust Castro met with failure at the Bay of Pigs. This failure embarrassed the administration and in essence sealed the fate of Cuba for years to come. While Kennedy was promising that the United States would not intervene militarily in Cuba, Krushchev warned that the Soviet Union would intervene if armed intervention were to take place against Cuba.

In Laos, meanwhile, the Pathet Lao was making substantial gains, threatening the regime of Phoumi Nosavan. The significance of Laos to Vietnam emerged in full force when it was agreed by Khrushchev and Kennedy that Laos should be neutralized. The effect of this agreement was viewed with apprehension by many in both the United States and Southeast Asia. The newly created Vietnam Task Force warned of the dangers posed to South Vietnam of a neutral Laos:

> ...the neutralization or loss of Laos to the Free World will, of course, compound the problems which the GVN faces in maintaining the security of their borders with Laos. It will also improve the Communist capabilities to infiltrate personnel and equipment into South Vietnam through Cambodia.... It requires the prompt organization of two new GVN divisions and a vastly accelerated U.S. training program for the entire GVN army.[81]

This agreement of neutralization occurred at the Vienna Summit on June 3-4, 1961. Two other aspects of the Vienna Summit affected the international arena which, in the perception of the President, presented an international challenge. The first was Nikita Khrushchev's demand that Berlin become a free city by December 31, 1961 and the second was the superpower disagreement as to the meaning of peaceful coexistence as applied to developing nations.

Had President Kennedy acquiesced on Berlin the United States would have been required to bargain for access and other occupation rights with East Germany.

As to the nature of the issue on the meaning of peaceful coexistence as applied to developing nations, President Kennedy and Premier Krushchev engaged in an exchange that significantly influenced the President. The issue that arose here dealt with potential Soviet support for wars of national liberation, as stated by Khrushchev in a speech in January 1961. Upon his return, Kennedy had the following to say in a television address to the nation:

> We have wholly different views of right and wrong, of what is an internal affair and what is aggression, and, above all, we have totally different concepts of where the world is and where it is going.[82]

This exchange between the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union stemmed from two changes in the international system. The first change was the proliferation of newly independent states and secondarily the increased Soviet nuclear capability. This newly emerging Soviet nuclear capability was used to threaten/influence the contest for these newly emerging nations by undermining America's efforts in those regions.

Thus, with the results of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the neutralization of Laos, Khrushchev's demands relative to Berlin, Khrushchev's 1961 speech in which he pledged Soviet support for wars of national liberation, coupled with the disagreement at the Vienna Summit on the meaning of peaceful coexistence relative to developing nations, President Kennedy felt this was a challenge the United States had to meet. The place to meet this challenge was Vietnam, therefore, early on, the Administration decided "to create a viable and increasingly democratic society in South Vietnam and to prevent Communist domination of the country."[83]

C. KENNEDY'S VIETNAM POLICY: COUNTERINSURGENCY

Having recognized the nature of guerrilla warfare, Kennedy sought a new and different approach to combating it. The nature of this approach lay in the President's concept of counterinsurgency. Before looking at the President's

views on counterinsurgency let us first define an insurgency:

> An insurgency is a condition created by a revolutionary mass movement, demanding drastic political, economic, and social change in a nation, and directed, specifically, toward the overthrow of that nation's government .... The three basic counterinsurgency measures are counterguerrilla operations environmental improvement, and population and resource control.[84]

In January 1962, Kennedy created the Special Group on Counterinsurgency and directed it and the Defense Department to coordinate a policy towards defeating the insurgency. The views on counterinsurgency held by the President seemed to include the following: (1) it is a limited war against Communist guerrillas; (2) whose main effort and responsibility fell upon native, not American, forces; (3) which is not just military but political, economic, social and psychological in nature; (4) whose principle objective is to win the hearts and minds of the population; (5) the outcome of which could be influenced by United States expertise and material support.[85] The key concept is that it is their war and not ours. The evolution of this approach to handling the Communist insurgency evolved in an atmosphere whereby many of the President's advisors called for the introduction of American ground troops into the conflict. The President, wary of the French experience in Indochina, opposed this. This evolution will be looked at next.

In May 1961, President Kennedy sent his Vice-President, Lyndon B. Johnson to Southeast Asia in an effort to reassure our allies. It should be recalled that at this time the situation in Laos was highly unstable. Upon his return from the area, the Vice-President noted that time was running out on the United States in Vietnam and that we had to decide whether or not to face the challenge. Johnson stated:

> This decision must be made in the full realization of the very heavy and continuing costs involved in terms of money, of effort and of United States prestige. It must be made with the knowledge that at some point we may be faced with the further decision of whether we commit major United States forces to the area or cut our losses and withdraw should our other efforts fail. We must remain masters in this decision.[86]

The Vice-President perceived the need for a clear cut American commitment to the area and seemed to suggest the possibility of an open-ended one, one including the introduction of American combat forces.

Vice-President Johnson's trip was followed by an economic mission headed up by Eugene Staley from May to July 1961. This mission produced the Staley Plan which called for, among other things, the establishment of strategic hamlets. This program was envisioned as a useful tool fitting nicely into the President's vision of counterinsurgency. The strategic hamlet program called for by Mr. Staley was the result of studies of the experiences of other nations such as Greece and Malaya. The objective

of this program was threefold: (1) protection of the population. This was to be done by separating the people from the guerrillas by placing them in hamlets protected by paramilitary forces with regular forces ready to prevent a major attack by the insurgents; (2) unite the population in positive action on behalf of the government; and (3) satisfy social, economic, and political needs of the villagers.[87]

Aside from the strategic hamlet program, the Staley mission also called for an acceleration of South Vietnam's economic programs and it stated that a viable South Vietnam was in the American national interest.

President Kennedy accepted the policy recommendations of the Staley mission but the strategic hamlet program was virtually a total failure because it was used by the Diem regime to control the villagers rather than pacify them.

In October 1961, the Taylor-Rostow mission was sent to Vietnam by the President. The Taylor-Rostow mission, as the name indicates, was headed by General Maxwell Taylor and White House Aid Walt Rostow.

The major thrust of the report produced by the Taylor-Rostow mission was that the Vietnam problem was primarily a military one which could be resolved by a larger American commitment of power. The report felt this should include, if necessary, American ground combat forces. The report

in essence, was rather upbeat but it stressed the necessity for an immediate response.

> ...vigorous American action is needed to buy time for Vietnam to mobilize and organize its real assets; but the time for such turn around has nearly run out. And if Vietnam goes, it will be exceedingly difficult if not impossible to hold Southeast Asia. What will be lost is not merely a crucial piece of real estate, but the faith that the U.S. has the will and capacity to deal with the Communist offensive in that area.[88]

The report was strongly supported by President Kennedy, however, the recommendation for a 10,000 man task force was turned down. The President, as he had in the past, insisted that the war could only be won if it remained a Vietnamese war and not a "white man's war."

The actual results of the Taylor-Rostow mission were threefold: (1) The President authorized sending in additional advisors to South Vietnam which exceeded the limits set by the Geneva Accords; (2) authorized equipment designed to increase the mobility of the South Vietnamese army; and (3) authorized sending in B-26 and T-28 squadrons.[89] In return for these authorizations, the President expected Ngo Dinh Diem to carry out reforms, however, he was never pressured to do so. This was evidenced in a letter sent by President Kennedy to President Diem in December 1961, in which Kennedy stated:

> ...we are prepared to help the Republic of Vietnam to protect its people and to preserve its independence. We shall promptly increase our assistance to your defense effort as well as help relieve the destruction of the floods which you describe. I have already given the order to get these programs underway.[90]

One can see then that the report by Vice-President Johnson and the Taylor-Rostow report both called for the introduction of American ground forces. The President, on the other hand continued to resist the employment of American ground forces. His aversion to this action was the product of several factors. His April 1961 talks with General Douglas MacArthur was a strong influence, his fears of making Vietnam a 'white man's war' was another, as was the international situation that existed wherein the President felt the United States had to conserve America's military resources. These factors were coupled with the fact that Kennedy felt there was a good chance of turning the tide through the application of the counterinsurgency methods he had outlined.[91]

By the end of 1962 it was evident that the proposals made by the Taylor-Rostow program had proven to be militarily ineffective as well as politically ineffective. Ironically though, pronouncements by State Department and Pentagon officials continued to be upbeat. Defense Secretary McNamara stated, for example, that "every quantitative measurement we have shows we are winning this war." In early 1963 Secretary of State Dean Rusk said that the struggle against the Viet Cong was "turning an important corner" and concluded that Saigon's forces "clearly have the initiative in most areas of the country."[92]

Between September 24 and October 1, 1963, Secretary of Defense McNamara and General Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were in Vietnam on orders from the President. Their mission was to assess the situation in South Vietnam and to ascertain why the counterinsurgency program was not succeeding.

The report submitted to the President concluded that the military situation was progressing well but that the repressive measures of the Diem regime were the root cause of the disaffection throughout South Vietnam.

Scantly a month before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, there were abundant signs that the President was seriously considering abandoning America's unconditional support of the Diem regime. This will be looked at in the next section.

D. DIEM, THE BUDDHIST CRISIS AND THE COUP

The repressive measures taken by the Diem regime, as discussed in Chapter III, continued throughout the time-frame of the Kennedy Administration.

Although the Administration asked Diem, on many occasions, to initiate reforms in order to build popular support, these requests went unheeded.

While in South Vietnam, Vice-President Johnson asked Diem to carry out various reforms such as rural programs, bringing opposition leaders into the government, and

bringing an end to military appointments based on political considerations. These, of course, were never carried out.

The strategic hamlet program, outlined by Staley, proved to be a failure. The program was designed to settle the peasants in secure areas and to satisfy their social, economic and political needs. Unfortunately the Diem regime used it as yet another means of repression.

The Taylor-Rostow report also called for reforms to go along with an increase in America's commitment to South Vietnam. In early 1962, the United States undertook its major military buildup in accordance with the program outlined by the Taylor-Rostow report, but, as always Diem proved unwilling to implement the required reforms.

Throughout the first two years of the Kennedy Administration, the United States did not truly pressure Diem to carry out the needed reforms, they were wedded to the notion that Diem was the best hope we had in South Vietnam. The other problem was that many leaders in the Administration felt that the situation in Vietnam was primarily a military problem. This point is aptly stated by Kahin and Lewis in their book, The United States in Vietnam.

> Despite the mounting threat it (the insurgency) posed to his regime, Diem was quite unable to appreciate the extent to which the insurgency was a response to his continuing repression. Authoritarian measures, he insisted, were rendered all the more necessary by the uprisings , which in his book were simply the result of Communist subversion.... Wedded to the idea that

> social and political reform should await the prior establishment of full security, Diem, like Washington, did not perceive that the war was first of all a political problem and could only be solved through primary political means.[93]

The stage was thus set for the events that were to begin on May 8, 1963 which would lead to the military coup in early November 1963.

On May 8, 1963, Buddhist demonstrators were attacked by South Vietnamese troops in the city of Hue. The protest stemmed from the government's ban on the flying of their religious flag in spite of the fact that the Catholics had been permitted to do so just a few weeks earlier (One should remember that the Ngo family was Catholic). Nine of the demonstrators were killed and scores of others were wounded.

Instead of admitting its mistake and diffusing the crisis, the government took a hard attitude and used tactics aimed at intimidating the Buddhists and their supporters. This government stance led to the spreading of the demonstrations.

By the end of May the United States was in a bind. Because of unswerving support to Diem for over nine years, the only alternative was to withdraw the unconditional support and attempt to force them to adopt reforms. The dilemma, though, was that this would "signal U.S. approval for an anti-Diem coup, with all its potential for political instability and erosion of the war effort."[94] The Administration exerted behind the scenes pressure on

Diem and on June 16 he issued a joint communique with the Buddhists, agreeing to meet their demands.

It soon became evident that this was simply a delaying tactic and on August 21, Diem and his brother Nhu ordered all out assaults on Buddhist pagodas in Saigon, Hue, and other cities. This action precipitated even further widespread demonstrations.

Three days later Ambassador Lodge received a cable from the State Department. He was directed to inform Diem to remove his brother Nhu or the United States would seek an alternative regime. He was further directed to inform South Vietnamese generals, plotting a coup, that they could expect American support in such an eventuality.[95] When President Kennedy was briefed on the contents of the cable, he immediately ordered a clarification of its contents. He sought to ensure that no American armed involvement occurred and also directed that no ultimatum be proferred Diem similar to the one indicated in the cable.

After a series of NSC meetings, in which questions of the importance of Vietnam to the United States and the usefulness of Diem were bitterly discussed, President Kennedy decided to exert pressure on Diem. The initial pressure took the form of public disapproval of Diem's actions against the Buddhists. On September 2, in an interview with CBS's Walter Cronkite, the President stated:

> I don't think that unless a greater effort is made by the government to win popular support that the war can be won out there.... The repressions against the Buddhists, we felt were very unwise. Now all we can do is to make it very clear that we don't think this is the way to win.[96]

The United States, simultaneously, used other methods of pressuring Diem such as the suspension of subsidies handled by the Commodity Imports Program, suspension of funding for Ngo Dinh Nhu's Special Forces, and the expressed intention of withdrawing 1000 military personnel by the end of 1963, which, although previously approved for other reasons, was seen as a useful means of pressure.

Diem's reaction to this toughened American policy was hostile, while, predictably the South Vietnamese generals perceived this new policy as a green light for their planned coup. According to The Pentagon Papers, America's policy, based on the results of the McNamara-Taylor report, was that,

> ...we do not wish to stimulate a coup, we also do not wish to leave the impression that the U.S. would thwart a change of government or deny economic and military assistance to a new regime if it appeared capable of increasing effectiveness of the military effort, ensuring popular support to win the war and improving relations with the U.S.....[97]

In early October a CIA operative met with General Duong Van Minh who gave him detailed plans of the upcoming coup. This data was relayed to the White House who in turn told Ambassador Lodge that if he

> ...thought that any South Vietnamese plan was likely to fail, he was ordered to communicate this to the Generals and persuade them to wait until their chances were better.[98]

On October 24 the U.S. mission received word from one of the Vietnamese Generals that the coup was on and that it would occur before November 2.

On November 1, 1963, the Presidential Palace was surrounded by the coup units and several key installations were taken. On the morning of November 2, the Presidential Palace fell and shortly thereafter Diem and Nhu were captured and then murdered enroute to the Vietnamese Joint General Staff Headquarters.

Although it is impossible to know how Kennedy would have reacted to subsequent international events and in Vietnam, he probably would have pursued the counter-insurgent methods he had adopted as long as he felt they had a reasonable chance of success.

> We in this country, in this generation are--by destiny rather than choice--the watchmen on the walls of freedom. We ask, therefore, that we may be worthy of our power and responsibility, that we may exercise our strength with wisdom and restraint, and that we may achieve in our time the ancient vision of 'peace on earth, good will toward men'. That must always be our goal, and the righteousness of our cause must always underlie our strength. For as was written long ago: 'except for the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain'.[99]

These words were prepared for delivery in Dallas on November 22, suggesting that our efforts would be continued in Vietnam with restraint i.e., counterinsurgency.

E. CONCLUSIONS

With the death of President Kennedy, another chapter in America's involvement in Southeast Asia came to an end.

The problem of Vietnam was one that Kennedy had inherited from his predecessor. Eisenhower's pledged support to Ngo Dinh Diem was a fait accompli. Even if the Kennedy Administration had felt Diem were not worth supporting, which initially was not generally questioned, Vietnam could not be treated as an isolated problem. President Kennedy felt challenged by Khrushchev's speech in January 1961, in which he supported wars on national liberation, by the Soviet threat to Berlin, and by the exchanges that took place at the Vienna Summit Conference. He was further concerned with America's image after the events at the Bay of Pigs and by the American compromise in Laos. In this light, Kennedy felt that if we did not stand firm in Vietnam, Khrushchev and the other leaders of the world would be convinced that we never would.

The President, like his predecessor, was also a firm believer in the domino theory. In an interview late in his Administration he was asked if he felt the rest of Southeast Asia would fall if Vietnam did. He stated:

> I believe it. I believe it. I think that the struggle is close enough. China is so large, looms so high just beyond the frontiers, that if South Vietnam went, it would not only give them an improved geographic position for a guerrilla assault on Malaya but would also give the impression that the wave of the future in Southeast Asia was China and the Communists. So I believe it.[100]

Also like his predecessor, Kennedy committed American power to preventing the fall of South Vietnam without

really having a strong political base with which to work from under the auspices of the Diem regime. Diem was continuously seen as America's only hope in Vietnam. Perhaps the root cause of this was that most of the Administration felt that the problem in South Vietnam was primarily a military one. Thus without developing a strategy that struck at the root cause of the problem, the political situation, was doomed to failure. The strategic hamlet program was a good strategy, but unfortunately it was never properly implemented.

When President Kennedy died, he was convinced that Vietnam was a vital American interest. Using our model presented in Chapter One, the outlook of his Administration would look like Chart 4.1 as shown on the next page.

During the Kennedy Administration the United States, rather than use American combat forces, continued to build and supply the South Vietnamese army and opted for a new kind of strategy, counterinsurgency, as a vehicle towards handling the problem in Vietnam. The President was adamant about turning Vietnam into a 'white man's war.'

This approach did not suggest that Vietnam was not perceived as a vital American interest. Quite the contrary, President Kennedy felt very strongly that it was and stated so time and again.

Chart 4.1
NATIONAL INTEREST MATRIX-KENNEDY

Country: U.S. Interest: Vietnam

Basic Interest at Stake	Intensity of Interest		
	Survival / Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of homeland		X	
Economic well-being		X	
Favorable world order	X		
Ideological	X		

V. JOHNSON: OPEN-ENDED COMMITMENT AND RETREAT

A. THE BEGINNING

Just four days after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 273 was adopted as an interim document. It essentially restated the Kennedy commitment to assist South Vietnam through counter-insurgency programs. It further emphasized America's subsidiary role. It stated in part that "this is a Vietnamese war and the country and the war must in the end be run solely by the Vietnamese."[101]

In light of what eventually evolved during his Administration, a quick look at statements by Johnson, while he was the Vice-President, are in order.

In May 1961, in a confidential memo to President Kennedy, Johnson made a statement that, in retrospect, portented greater United States involvement in Southeast Asia. He stated:

> The battle against Communism must be joined in Southeast Asia with strength and determination to achieve success there--or the United States, inevitably, must surrender the Pacific and take up our defenses on our own shores.... The struggle is far from lost in Southeast Asia and it is by no means inevitable that it must be lost.... <u>There is no alternative to United States leadership in Southeast Asia</u>.[102]

Further on in his memorandum, Johnson indicated his belief in the domino theory and the need to maintain America's commitments:

Chart 5.1

Southeast Asia

> The basic decision in Southeast Asia is here. We must decide whether to help these countries to the best of our ability or throw in the towel in the area and pull back our defenses to San Francsico and 'Fortress America' concept. More important, we would say to the world in this case that we don't live up to treaties and don't stand by our friends. This is not my concept.[103]

On the question of using American ground troops in Southeast Asia, Johnson stated:

> Asian leaders--at this time--do not want American troops.... This does not minimize or disregard the probability that open attack would bring calls for U.S. combat troops. But the present probability of open attack seems scant, and we might gain much needed flexibility in our policies if the spectre of combat troop commitment could be lessened domestically.[104]

From these statements by LBJ in 1961, two conclusions emerge: first, Johnson firmly believed that a non-Communist South Vietnam was in the national interest, and secondly the United States had not only the responsiblity, but also the capability of influencing events in Asia, and specifically so in South Vietnam.

With this in mind, let us now return our attention to President Johnson's first year in office.

Shortly after the evolution of NSAM 273, reports began to filter back to Washington that the military situation was rapidly deteriorating. These reports were the result of the near total disintegration of the strategic hamlet program in the provinces near Saigon. The hamlets were being overrun by the Viet Cong on a nearly daily basis and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) was not

providing timely support. As a result, LBJ ordered Secretary of Defense McNamara to Saigon (18-20 Dec., 1963).

McNamara indeed found that the situation in Vietnam had deteriorated and ordered certain immediate corrective actions to stem the tide. Another thing McNamara discovered was, that since the death of Diem a neutralist sentiment had gained force under the advocacy of the Buddhists and the supporting student groups. McNamara used his visit as a statement of U.S. opposition to a neutralist settlement, and prior to his departure he and General Minh exchanged promises to oppose the neutralization of South Vietnam.

In his report to the President, McNamara was deeply concerned with the military situation. He stated:

> Viet Cong progress has been great during the period since the coup, with my best guess being that the situation has in fact been deteriorating in the countryside since July to a far greater extent than we realized because of undue dependence on distorted Vietnamese reporting the Viet Cong now control very high proportions of the people in certain key provinces, particularly those directly South and West of Saigon.[105]

McNamara also expressed concern over the neutralist sentiment and over the indecision that permeated the Minh government.

In an effort to strengthen the Minh government and to stem the neutralist sentiment in Vietnam, President Johnson, in a New Years message to General Minh stated, in part:

> ...neutralization would only be another name for a Communist takeover.... The United States will continue to furnish you and your people with the

> fullest measure of support in this bitter fight.... We shall maintain in Vietnam American personnel and material as needed to assist you in achieving victory.[106]

In spite of LBJ's message, the neutralist sentiment continued to grow. This fact, among others, led to a bloodless coup whereby on January 30, 1964, General Khanh repudiated neutralism and aligned his government with the United States on this issue. Almost immediately the United States declared its willingness to work with his government.

In spite of the new government and continued U.S. aid, the situation in Vietnam continued to deteriorate. Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) 50-64 entitled "Short Term Prospects in SEA" of February 12, 1964, concluded the following:

> ...the situation in Vietnam is very serious and prospects uncertain. Even with U.S. assistance as it is now, we believe that, unless there is a marked improvement in the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese government and armed forces, South Vietnam has, at best, an even chance of withstanding the insurgency menace during the next few weeks or months.[107]

This SNIE coupled with an assessment by Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), which stated that the root cause of the increased Viet Cong attacks was the political instability that resulted from the Diem coup, led President Johnson to send McNamara and General Taylor (CJCS) to Vietnam on March 8, 1964. Out of this trip evolved NSAM 288 which was approved by the President on March 17, 1964.

This document was an explicit statement of the domino theory. It stated categorically that if South Vietnam fell, twelve other countries would follow suit. It led one to believe that Vietnam was the West's last hope in Asia. The document further brought out, for the first time, that America's prestige was at stake. A failure to meet this Communist war of liberation would in essence weaken America's worldwide strategic position.[108]

The JCS, on several occasions, argued that NSAM 288 was not strong enough. What they were seeking was expressed by General Taylor in the following Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum. (JCSM):

> The JCS do not believe that the recommended program in itself will be sufficient to turn the tide against the Viet Cong in South Vietnam without positive action against the Hanoi government at an early date....[109]

What they called for was an unlimited bombing campaign against the North in order to dissuade their support for the Viet Cong.

By this time the President, the Secretary of Defense, the JCS and others had come to believe that Hanoi was playing a decisive role in the insurgency. As early as February 1964, the President, in an address, indicated a large North Vietnamese role:

> Those engaged in external direction and supply would do well to be reminded and to remember that this type of aggression is a deeply dangerous game.[110]

Just one month later, Secretary McNamara was much more explicit in a public statement of U.S. policy in Vietnam.

> Who is the responsible party--the prime aggressor? First and foremost, without doubt, the prime aggressor is North Vietnam, whose leadership has explicitly undertaken to destroy the independence of the South.[111]

With these statements and others throughout the spring and summer, President Johnson left no doubt that the United States would take whatever action was necessary in the defense of South Vietnam. At this point, though, he truly hoped that American ground combat troops would not be necessary.

One must remember that 1964 was an election year and the President most certainly had this on his mind. Throughout his campaign he sought to give the impression of restraint on the part of his Administration which contrasted sharply with the hawkish attitudes of his opponent, Senator Barry Goldwater. To prevent any drastic moves until after the election, the President ordered his Administration to take whatever interim measures were necessary to boost the morale of the South Vietnamese and to ensure that the Communists were convinced of America's determination. Also during this time frame the Administration was devising contingency plans that would subsequently be transformed into greater U.S. involvement in the year following the election. This aspect will be covered in sections C and D of this chapter.

Not all of the President's advisors were of the opinion that North Vietnam was the primary aggressor in the South. For example, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Roger Hilsman felt that the problem in South Vietnam was first and foremost an internal problem.

> Rather than chasing the Viet Cong, the military must put primary emphasis on clear-and-hold operations and on rapid reinforcement of villages under attack. It is also important, of course, to keep the Viet Cong regular units off balance by conventional offensive operations, but these should be secondary to the major task of extending security...[112]

Hilsman's approach was flatly rejected which led to his resignation from office. From that date on talks of military action against the North increased. What was needed now was a Congressional resolution supporting such action.

B. THE TONKIN GULF INCIDENT

On April 2, 1964 the destroyer U.S.S. Maddox was attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin by three North Vietnamese torpedo boats. Under orders from President Johnson, the Maddox continued to steam in the Gulf and was reinforced with a second destroyer, the Turner Joy. Two nights later, with nervous tension running high on the ships on patrol and coupled with poor visibility, an incident occurred which the ship's captains took for a second North Vietnamese attack.

Subsequent to the alleged second attack, the President approved a military response at an NSC meeting. That same night he went on national television and informed the American public that retaliatory action was already underway. "Air action is now in execution against gunboats and certain supporting facilities in North Vietnam which have been used in these hostile operations."[113] against American forces.

On August 7, the Congess of the United States passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution (for full text see Appendix B). The Resolution read in part:

> The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, preprared, as the President determines, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.[114]

The support from Congress, spelled out in the Resolution, gave the President a free hand in whatever action he deemed necessary.

Leslie H. Gelb and Richard K. Betts, in their book, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked, placed a great deal of significance on the American retaliatory air strike against the North, code-named Pierce Arrow. They state:

> It represented both a culmination and a prologue: Pierce Arrow capped the period of strategy-making that focused on restricting American involvement in

> Indochina to aid, assistance, and covert pressure against the DRV , and it foreshadowed the final turning of strategy toward acceptance of the inevitability of more direct U.S. participation in the war.[115]

For three years prior to the Tonkin Gulf incident many minor and ill-fated covert operations were being taken against the North. However, in February 1964, President Johnson authorized OPLAN 34-A. It was envisioned to be a two-phase program of intelligence collection, psychological operations, and sub rosa escalating "destructive undertakings" against North Vietnam. The rationale behind 34-A was to "convince the DRV leadership that they should cease to support insurgent activities in the RVN (South Vietnam) and Laos."[116] When the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was passed by votes of 88-2 in the Senate and 416-0 in the House, the Congress was not aware of the fact that 34-A operations were going on in the vicinity when the North Vietnamese attacked the Maddox.

C. DECISION TO BOMB THE NORTH

America's unconditional bombing campaign against North Vietnam commenced on March 2, 1965 and was to continue, with occasional halts, until November 1, 1968, when the President ordered a total halt in order to get the Paris Peace Talks off the ground.

Throughout 1964, President Johnson clung to the hope that direct and sustained use of American force might be averted, however, he did not equivocate on the goals

behind U.S. policy. He was convinced that America's credibility was on the line and that if the United States failed, all would be lost.

As the situation in the South continued to deteriorate, the President came under increasing pressure to authorize the bombing of the North. As mentioned in section A of this chapter, contingency plans were in the works. These had been authorized by the President in an NSC meeting on March 17, 1964. The JCS, who were the strongest advocates of bombing, developed extensive contingency plans. A committee, formed by General Krulak, had developed a plan for graduated escalation against the DRV. This plan was firmly supported by the JCS.

In early June 1964, the President's principle advisors on Vietnam met in Honolulu. Both Rusk, representing the State Department, and Taylor, from the JCS, discussed questions as to the objectives of the proposed bombing campaign. The Secretary of State viewed the bombing as a means of containing Asian Communism: "our point of departure is and must be that we cannot accept the over-running of Southeast Asia by Hanoi and Peiping (Beijing)."[117] The JCS position was that "the United States should seek through military actions to accomplish the destruction of the North Vietnamese will and capability as necessary to compel the DRV to cease providing support to the insurgencies in South Vietnam and Laos." The JCS

added that limited military action designed to change Hanoi's will would probably only achieve a temporary lessening of North Vietnamese aggression, and strongly argued for a more forceful and immediate strike against the DRV. The Conference ended with agreement to execute specific military preparations for a rapid and powerful air campaign against the North.[118]

The next major event that occurred was the Tonkin Gulf incident which was discussed in section B, and by September 1964, there was a consensus in the government on additional pressure against the North. This consensus was further strengthened by a North Vietnamese PT boat attack on American destroyers in the Gulf on September 18.

In spite of the increasing pressure on the President and the consensus of State and Defense, LBJ still deferred on carrying out bombing attacks against the North. The primary reason appears to be the close proximity of the elections.

After his stunning victory in the 1964 elections, President Johnson initiated a month-long policy review which culminated in a consensus for a two-phase expansion of the war. Phase I would intensify air strikes in Laos and covert actions agaist the DRV; Phase II would be a sustained, escalating air campaign against the North. The President approved Phase I for December and approved Phase II in principle. The two-phase plan had emerged from an NSC working group that had developed three options. Option

A was a continuation of limited operations; Option B would augment the current policy with heavy and systematic pressures on the North; and Option C was a more modest campaign against the DRV. The JCS favored Option B.[119]

Under Secretary of State George Ball rejected this policy. He stated:

> If the political situation in Saigon should continue to crumble, air action against North Vietnam could at best bring a Phyrric victory. Even with diminished North Vietnamese support for the Viet Cong, a disorganized South Vietnamese Government would be unable to eliminate the insurgency.[120]

Ball foresaw that bombing would probably be countered by increased North Vietnamese usage of ground forces and if they and the Viet Cong were successful, there would be tremendous pressure on the United States to introduce ground combat troops. His warning went unheeded.

On November 1, the American air base at Bien Hoa came under mortar attack in which five Americans were killed and a squadron of B-57 bombers was destroyed, and on December 24, a U.S. officer's billet in Saigon was bombed resulting in two more deaths. Although outraged, the President refused to approve reprisal raids. By February 1965 Johnson's views had changed.

In a memo from McGeorge Bundy and McNamara, he was presented with two alternatives that were perceived to be the only options left to prevent a debacle. The first called for the employment of American air power in order to

force a change in the Communists' policy or to negotiate. Secretary Rusk objected because he felt either alternative had devastating consequences. He felt the United States should redirect its efforts to making the current policy work. His views went unheeded and now all that was needed was a provocation for the commencement of Phase II, the bombing of the North.

On February 6, 1965, the new Soviet Premier, Aleksei Kosygin arrived in Hanoi. On February 7, the Viet Cong attacked American barracks at Pleiku and the U.S. helicopter base at Camp Holloway. McGeorge Bundy was in Saigon at the time, and he immediately recommended the

> execution of a policy of sustained reprisal against North Vietnam--a policy in which air and naval action against the North is justified by and in retaliation to the whole Viet Cong campaign of terror and violence in the South.... In practice, we may wish at the outset to relate our reprisals to those acts of relatively high visibility such as the Pleiku incident.... Once a program of reprisals is underway, it should not be necessary to connect each specific act against North Vietnam to a particular outrage in the South.... This reprisal policy should begin at a low level. Its level of force and pressure should be increased only gradually...it should be decreased if VC terror gradually decreased. The object would not be to 'win' any air war against Hanoi, but rather to influence the course of the struggle in the South.[121]

All of Johnson's principle advisors concurred with the Bundy proposals and on February 8 the first Flaming Dart reprisal raid was carried out. The air war was on.

In connection with the Pleiku attack, a White House Statement was issued. It expressed the hope that a wider

war would not ensue, but the American response was totally dependent on Hanoi's actions.

> The key to the situation remains the cessation of infiltration from North Vietnam and the clear indication by the Hanoi regime that it is prepared to cease aggression against its neighbor.[122]

By February 13, there was no response from Hanoi that it was prepared to cease its aggression, so LBJ approved the Rolling Thunder program which was publicly announced on February 28. On March 2, the first strikes under this program were launched and the bombing continued almost continuously, until November 1, 1968.

In the early 1960's, the term escalation gained popularization, it referred to a process of increasing violence set in motion by miscalculation and reflected a fundamental concern with the problems relating to the use of force in the nuclear era. A real quick look at this notion is in order.

"Escalation" was defined as "the unpremeditated increase or spread of a limited operation," in which any military reaction was considered escalatory if it led to the expansion of a conflict. It was accepted that if one side took a course of action, the other side would respond with a stronger action ultimately leading the opponents on to an "escalation ladder," of which the last rung resulted in all-out nuclear war.[123]

To prevent such an occurrence, a nation must place clear limits on operations and must have a "general ceiling" on the goals of a nation. President Kennedy strove to avoid "unrealistic objectives that could be regarded as threatening (to) other nations." With clearly defined and limited goals, he sought to relieve "the pressures toward escalation." Conversely, "the Johnson Administration (had) been following a policy in Vietnam of escalation that (was) graduated, but open-ended." No upper limit was set to the amount of force to be employed that could realistically describe the "ultimate political aims in Vietnam that this application of force (was) meant to secure." This was so because

> the rationale for projecting this military power now bears little relation to the target area against which it is physically focused. The use of force had, in fact, become ever more concerned with a global image and the wish to demonstrate to an international audience that the Administration is resolute and that America's allies can rely upon its power for their protection. More and more the weight of American power in Vietnam has been increased because of considerations transcending that country and even Southeast Asia as a whole...insofar as escalation involves a relationship between ends and means, in its involvement in Vietnam the United States is concerned with ends that go far beyond that country itself.[124]

With this notion in mind let us next look at the evolution that led to the arrival of American ground troops in Vietnam.

D. COMMITMENT OF U.S. GROUND TROOPS

Throughout the spring of 1965, America's top leaders were debating the bombing strategy which unfolded on March 2, 1965, with virtually no discussion on troops. Once American air power was deployed against the North from bases in South Vietnam, General Westmoreland became concerned with base security. He felt it imperative that American troops provide this security against Viet Cong retaliation. Thus, on March 8, 3500 Marines landed at Da Nang. JCS instructed CINCPAC that the Marines "will not, repeat not, engage in day to day actions against the Viet Cong."[125] By the end of April additional troops had been introduced bringing the total number of military personnel in Vietnam to 33,500.

These troops, designed to raise South Vietnamese morale, free South Vietnamese troops for combat, and to demonstrate American determination to meet its commitment,[126] proved insufficient. The situation in Vietnam continued its rapid pace of deterioration. Politically, Vietnam, by June 1965, had its seventh government since the Tonkin Gulf incident. Militarily, America's bombing campaign had not broken the North's will, in fact the Hanoi government was more resolute. Infiltration of North Vietnamese combat units was on the rise as was the Viet Cong strength. Conversely,

> By late spring of 1965 the South Vietnamese Army was losing almost one infantry battalion a week to enemy action. Additionally, the enemy was gaining control of at least one district capital town each week.... The Government of Vietnam could not survive this mounting...offensive for more than six months unless the United States chose to increase its military commitment. Substantial numbers of U.S. ground combat forces were required.[127]

The President was faced with a major decision, one he did not hesitate to make. On June 27, 1965, he authorized the first Search and Destroy mission and in July approved 100,000 additional U.S. combat troops, bringing the projected year-end total to 175,000 men. The United States was at war.

It is ironic that the decision to bomb the North had taken a great deal of time to be approved and was done with great trepidation, and yet the commitment of ground troops, a decision that would appear to have been far more difficult to approve, came relatively easily.

By the end of 1965 the United States had 184,300 men committed in Vietnam and by the time LBJ left office the total was to reach 536,100. America's incremental commitment of forces in Vietnam was met by a stronger action from the North Vietnamese/Viet Cong, the United States was on the "escalation ladder."

Once he authorized the Search and Destroy missions and after approving the additional troop commitment to Vietnam, President Johnson, in a White House news conference, spelled out the American interests in Vietnam as follows:

There are great stakes in the balance.

Most of the non-Communist nations of Asia cannot, by themselves and alone, resist the growing might and the grasping ambition of Asian Communism.

Our power therefore, is a very vital shield. If we are driven from the field in Vietnam, then no nation can ever again have the same confidence in American promise or in American protection.

In each land, the forces of independence would be considerably weakened and an Asia so threatened by Communist domination would certainly imperil the security of the United States itself.

We did not choose to be the guardians at the gate, but there is no one else.

Nor would surrender in Vietnam bring peace, because we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of the aggressor. The battle would be renewed in one country and then in another country, bringing with it perhaps even larger and crueler conflict, as we have learned from the lessons of history.

Moreover we are in Vietnam to fulfill one of the most solemn pledges of the American nation. Three Presidents --President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and your present President--over eleven years have committed themselves and have promised to help defend this small and valiant nation.

Strengthened by that promise, the people of South Vietnam have fought for many long years. We just cannot now dishonor our word, or abandon our commitment, or leave those who believed in us and who trusted us to the terror and represssion and murder that would follow.

This, then, my fellow Americans, is why we are in Vietnam.[128]

This statement coupled with others by leading policymakers attempted to spell out America's interests in Vietnam, that is, the resistance of Communist aggression. Why, though, did America move so quickly to introduce U.S. combat

forces? What was the world situation in 1965 that impacted on this decision?

President Johnson saw that the alternatives to war in Vietnam would have invariably led to an imbalance in the Asian power structure, and would have caused a marked decline in the credibility of American commitments. His rationale for this belief was explained as follows:

> This is what I could foresee: First, from all the evidence available to me it seemed likely that all of Southeast Asia would pass under Communist control, slowly or quickly, but inevitably, at least down to Singapore but almost certainly to Djakarta. I realize that some Americans, through talking with one another, repealed the domino theory. In 1965 there was no indication in Asia, or from Asians, that this was so.[129]

Was there a possibility "that all of Southeast Asia would pass under Communist control," in 1965? History has not shown this to be true, however, in 1965, the political evolution of Southeast Asia was by no means assured!

Indonesia, the most populous and most endowed Southeast Asian state in terms of natural resources, was experiencing the rise in political power of the PKI, its Communist Party. The nation had been embarked on foreign confrontations designed to legitimize Sukarno's "guided democracy," which also served to enhance the influence of the PKI.[130] While the mutual Sukarno-PKI anti-imperialist posture justified the confrontations, first Soviet and then Chinese material support was deemed necessary for their successful prosecution. Thus there existed a strong ideologic and material

basis for Sukarno's support of the PKI, which became more manifest in late 1964 and 1965 as he dropped two leading anti-Communists and added the third-ranking PKI official to his Cabinet. In May 1965 Sukarno declared: "It is not strange that I embrace the PKI. The PKI has always stood in the forefront of the implementation of the policies of the Indonesian revolution."[131] He later announced at an Independence Day Celebration, "I am a friend of the Communists because the Communists are a revolutionary people." On the same occasion he announced the formation of the Djakarta--Phnom Penh--Hanoi--Peiking (Beijing)--Pyongyang axis," a nucleus of the New Emerging Forces he had proclaimed in juxtaposition to the U.N. the preceding April.[132]

The purpose of the New Emerging Forces appeared to be expansive in nature. This showed itself in the rise of Communist guerrilla activities in the Northern part of Malaysia coupled with similar activities in the south supported by Indonesia. At the same time, the Voice of Free Thailand began to broadcast from mainland China and shortly thereafter it announced the formation of the Thailand Patriotic Front designed to oppose American influence in the region.[133] In Cambodia, Sihanouk reflected the mood of the times as he predicted the inevitable triumph of Communism in his country.

Besides the aforementioned New Emerging Force's activities in the summer of 1965, there was a Beijing--Djakarta arms deal being arranged, and planning for the use of Sihanoukville to supply the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam.[134] Looking back at his perception of Southeast Asia at the time, LBJ remarked:

> Thus, what we saw taking shape rapidly was a Djakarta--Hanoi--Beijing--Pyongyang axis, with Cambodia probably to be brought in as a junior partner and Laos to be merely absorbed by the North Vietnamese and Chinese. The members of this new axis were undoubtedly counting on South Vietnam's collapse and an ignominious American withdrawal. Under such circumstances Britain, already facing financial troubles and moving toward a reduction in its involvement in Asia, would undoubtedly have been even less eager to support Malaysia and Singapore. The entire region would then have been ripe for the plucking.[135]

Seeing Southeast Asia in this vein, the introduction of U.S. combat forces into Vietnam took on a different light. These considerations must have weighed heavily in the President's mid-1965 decision to increase strength levels to 175,000 men. A year later, after the abortive PKI uprising and the attendant fall of Sukarno and his programs coupled with the Cultural Revolution in which China directed her energies inward, the reason for resisting aggression as laid out above should have deserved reconsideration. However, by this time, the U.S. had "crossed the Rubicon," and the growing weight of American involvement in itself served to justify deepening that involvement further.[136]

E. PEACE INITIATIVES

Prior to the opening of the Paris Peace Talks in 1968 and as early as late 1963, several attempts were made to bring a peaceful solution to the emerging conflict in Vietnam. The objective of this section is to briefly mention some of these initiatives.

Shortly after the death of Ngo Dinh Diem, U. Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations, sought the neutralization of South Vietnam through the formation of a coalition government in Saigon. In a meeting with President Johnson and through a message to Ho Chi Minh, he proposed talks for a settlement. Simultaneously, Cambodian Chief of State Sihanouk invited South Vietnam to join Cambodia in a neutral confederation. These proposals were rejected outright by the United States.[137]

In July 1964, U. Thant once again tried to arrange a peaceful solution to the conflict in Vietnam. He called for a reconvening of the Geneva Conference. French President Charles DeGaulle immediately threw his weight behind the proposal. Communications were sent out to the fourteen nations that had participated in the 1961-1962 Geneva Conference on Laos. China, the National Liberation Front and Cambodia indicated prompt support for this approach, however, the United States rejected this proposal.

Just prior to the 1964 elections, U. Thant again tried to reach a peaceful settlement in Vietnam. He proposed that

Hanoi and Washington secretly send emissaries to Rangoon to discuss the conflict. This proposal was accepted by Hanoi, but the United States wanted to postpone the talks until after the election. After the election, U. Thant again proposed the talks. Again Hanoi agreed, however, the United States flatly refused to meet with the North Vietnamese.

Shortly after the United States launched its reprisal attacks against North Vietnam on February 7, 1965, Secretary General U. Thant, the Soviet Union and France "each sought to divert the United States away from this course, and onto one of negotiation and compromise.... The White House's response to U. Thant's proposals was sharp and negative."[138]

In an April 7, 1965 speech at Johns Hopkins University President Johnson said the United States was ready to engage in "unconditional discussions."[139] The Hanoi Government responded with its Four Points the next day.[140] In order to keep the initiative alive and under pressure to make another move to bring about negotiations, the President called for a bombing halt which went into effect on May 12. The President, in a message to Ambassador Lodge, stated his purpose in ordering the bombing pause.

> You should understand that my purpose in this plan is to begin to clear a path either toward restoration of peace or toward increased military action, depending upon the reaction of the Communists.[141]

With no positive response from the North Vietnamese leaders, the bombing was resumed on May 18.

In November 1965, the Italian Government tried to mediate the struggle, however, when the initiative was made public the North Vietnamese said the peace feeler was a sheer fabrication. The Administration, under pressure, called for a thirty-six hour Christmas truce and agreed to extend the bombing halt through the end of January 1966.

On January 7, the United States proposed a list of fourteen principles that included a discussion of Hanoi's four points. This proposal was rejected by Ho Chi Minh because "of its failure to grant the NLF the status of a principle combatent in the war. He also questioned the United States' sincerity, as Washington had increased its troop commitment during the bombing pause."[142]

In October 1966, a promising mediation effort was underway at the hands of the Polish representative to the International Control Commission in Vietnam. This effort held out the promise of face-to-face talks with North Vietnamese representatives without requiring a bombing halt on the part of the United States, which had previously been a North Vietnamese prerequisite. The path appeared to be clear for the beginning of talks on December 6, however, on December 2 the United States carried out massive raid against strategic targets in and around Hanoi.

These and other peace initiatives led to no solution of the Vietnam conflict. That solution was going to have to await a significant event that would untrack one side or the other. The significant event that accomplished just that was the TET offensive of 1968.

F. TET

When the year 1968 dawned, no one in the Administration expected it to be the year that many established policies would be stood on their head, but, as we well know, such was the case.

In early 1967 the Viet Cong were being deprived of their source of recruits, supplies and tax revenue due to the continual exodus of South Vietnamese villagers to the comparative safety of the towns and cities. Therefore, the North Vietnamese and the NLF began plans for a general offensive designed to increase anti-war feelings in the United States and to ignite a general uprising in the South with the ultimate goal of reunification.

By late 1967 it was becoming apparent to the U.S. that something big was in the works in South Vietnam. In order to place the United States in a dilemma, on December 30, North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh announced that, "if the United States halted its bombing unconditionally, North Vietnam would hold talks with the United States on relevant questions."[143] The United

placed Hanoi and Haiphong off limits to bombing while seeking some clarification of the North's position.

However, on the night of January 30, 1968, seven cities in the northern half of South Vietnam were attacked. The TET offensive was on.

The general uprising that was hoped for by the Viet Cong never materialized. In fact the offensive turned out to be a military debacle for both the Viet Cong and the North Veitnamese, however, the TET offensive hit the bulls eye of American public opinion.[144]

G. TET: POSTSCRIPT

LBJ's reaction to the impact of the TET offensive on America's thinking was one of disbelief.

> I did not expect the enemy effort to have the impact on American thinking that it achieved. I was not surprised that elements of the press, the academic community, and the Congress reacted as they did. I was surprised and disappointed that the enemy's efforts produced such a dismal effect on various people inside government and others outside whom I had always regarded as staunch and unflappable. Hanoi must have been delighted; it was exactly the reaction they sought.[145]

General Wheeler was ordered to Vietnam on February 21, and five days later cabled back a request for an additional 205,000 combat troops by the end of the year. This request triggered a complete reappraisal of our Vietnam policy within the Administration. On February 28, the President named an Ad Hoc Task Force on Vietnam to be headed by Clark Clifford. The Task Force's recommendations

were presented to Johnson on March 4. The Task Force recommended sending an additional 23,000 troops immediately, a reserve call-up of around 245,000 men, reserving judgment on the total request of 205,000 men and examining the situation week by week, action to improve the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese army, and no new peace initiative.[146]

By March 8 the President had decided against sending the additional 205,000 men requested by Westmoreland and a week later rejected Ambassador Goldberg's suggestion for a complete bombing halt, although he had agreed on March 5 to Secretary Rusk's suggestion of a bombing halt north of the 20th parallel.

Meanwhile, on the domestic front, on March 12 Senator McCarthy made a strong showing in the New Hampshire primary. On March 16 Robert F. Kennedy threw his hat into the ring and public opinion over the war was exacerbated by a leak over the request for 205,000 more troops.

On March 18, 139 members of the House sponsored a resolution calling for an immediate Congressional review of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia.[147]

On March 26, the President met with a group of advisors known as the Wise Men. This group included former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, former Under Secretary, George Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Arthur Dean, Douglas Dillon, Henry Cabot Lodge, Robert Murphy, former Chiefs of Staff,

General Bradley, General Ridgeway, and General Taylor, and former Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance. This group of non-governmental advisors concurred with Johnson's refusal to dispatch the additional forces requested by General Westmoreland.

On March 31, 1968, Lyndon B. Johnson went before the nation to announce a policy shift and his decision not to seek re-election. He announced the bombing halt north of the 20th parallel, he signified a rejection of the 205,000 man request by announcing the dispatch of 13,500 support troops, and he concluded, "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."[148] Three days later Hanoi responded to LBJ's initiative.

H. PARIS PEACE TALKS

After a month of haggling over the site for commencement of the peace talks, North Vietnam finally suggested Paris on May 3, and the United States accepted. Finally, the talks began in Paris on May 13, 1968.

The talks immediately ground to a standstill as North Vietnam insisted on a complete bombing halt before any further discussions could take place. The United States' position was that no bombing halt could be agreed upon if it precluded the United States from carrying out reconnaissance flights over the North. In the middle of the summer the United States informed the North Vietnamese

delegation that South Vietnam would have to be included in the talks and that the bombing pause would not continue if there were large-scale attacks by the enemy on South Vietnam's cities.

On September 17, the leading U.S. negotiator, Harriman proposed to LBJ that a complete bombing halt be considered on Hanoi's implicit acceptance of America's conditions. The President was pressured by Harriman and Cyrus Vance to accept this implicit understanding because they doubted whether it was politically feasible for Hanoi to make an explicit statement.

On October 11, the North Vietnamese asked whether the United States would halt the bombing if Hanoi agreed to South Vietnam's participation in the next stage of the talks. The U.S. agreed provided serious talks began within twenty-four hours. After some give and take, it was agreed that the United States and the DRV would announce the bombing halt and other terms of the understanding on October 31.

On the evening of October 31, 1968, President Johnson went on the air and announced that he had ordered the cessation of U.S. air, naval, and artillery bombardment of North Vietnam, to be effective 0800 Washington time on November 1.

After further delays, the Paris Peace Talks began on January 25, 1969, five days after the inauguration of Richard M. Nixon.

I. CONCLUSIONS

Within four months of taking office, Lyndon Johnson had defined American interests as requiring that South Vietnam remain a non-Communist state. This requirement led to the introduction of over a half-million American ground troops, and resulted in a widespread bombing program throughout all of Vietnam.

In large part, the President's actions were predicated on his perception of the global situation in late 1964 and early 1965. The evolution of events in Indonesia certainly concerned him as did the events that were occurring in China. He truly feared the evolution of a Beijing--Djakarta axis and the effects it would have on the newly formed Malaysian federation. Sihanouk's flirtation with both China and Indonesia coupled with the use of Sihanoukville as a supply port to support the Viet Cong added to his concerns. The situation in Laos was such that he feared its demise at the hands of the Chinese and Vietnamese, and he felt that if the United States were thrown out of Vietnam, the North Koreans might try and go South again.

If South Vietnam collapsed and the United States withdrew, there would be nothing to stop the alignment of these Communist powers.[149]

The Administration failed to recognize the realities of the problem in South Vietnam. The war in South Vietnam was an insurgency supported from the outside, not an invasion supported by an insurgency. The southern rooted insurgency had always been the most important factor in the war.[150] Therefore, that which made the insurgency possible, the infrastructure of the Viet Cong, had to be neutralized. President Kennedy recognized this important factor as did Roger Hilsman. In Hilsman's case, however, he was but one voice in an ocean of cold war warriors.

Whether Hilsman's approach would have been successful, no one will ever know, however, it would have probably resulted in a lower level of violence and it would have struck more directly at the root cause of the insurgency.

Another factor that was not taken into account by the Johnson Administration, or for that matter, the Administrations of his predecessors, was the strong nationalistic bent of the Vietnamese cause. This factor coupled with the historical animosity that has existed between the Chinese and the Vietnamese could well have resulted in Vietnam's evolving as the Yugoslavia of Asian Communism. It is, of course, receognized that the historical events of 1949 and 1950 and the attendant Cold War atmosphere made this well-nigh impossible.

Looking at our model outlined in Chapter One, President Johnson's outlook vis-a-vis Vietnam would probably have looked like this.

Chart 5.2
NATIONAL INTEREST MATRIX-JOHNSON

Country: U.S.	Issue: Vietnam			
Basic Interest at Stake	Intensity of Interest			
	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of homeland			X	
Economic well-being				X
Favorable world order		X		
Ideological		X		

President Johnson considered Vietnam a vital interest in every sense of the word. He committed the United States to a long and costly war in Vietnam. In his memoirs he listed various reasons for his actions, which give us an indication of the national interests he sought to defend.

World order interest:

> From all the evidence available to me it seemed likely that all of Southeast Asia would pass under Communist control, slowly or quickly, but inevitably, at least down to Singapore but almost certainly to Djakarta.... The evidence before me as President confirmed the previous assessments of President Eisenhower and of President Kennedy.[151]

Ideological interest:

> I knew our people well enough to realize that if we walked away from Vietnam and let Southeast Asia fall, there would follow a divisive and destructive debate in our country. This had happened when the Communists took power in China.[152]

World order and ideological interest:

> Our allies not just in Asia but throughout the world would conclude that our word was worth little or nothing. Those who had counted so long for their security on American commitments would be deeply shaken and vulnerable.[153]

World order interest:

> Knowing what I did of the policies and actions of Moscow and Beijing, I was sure as a man could be that, if we did not live up to our commitments in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, they would move to exploit the disarray in the United States and in the alliances of the Free World.[154]

Defense interest:

> As we faced the implications of what we had done as a nation, I was sure the United States would not then passively submit to the consequences. With Moscow and Beijing and perhaps others moving forward we would return to a world role to prevent their full takeover of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East--after they had committed themselves.[155]

If President Johsnon had had a method of determining the national interest comparable to the one outlined in Chapter One, he may have come to realize that only two value factors were at stake: (1) the balance of power in Asia and (2) national prestige. However, when weighed against such cost/risk factors as economic costs, estimated casualties, risk of protracted conflict, cost of defeat or stalemate, and risk of public opposition, he

may well have concluded that the cost/risk factors far outweighed the value of factors.

To reinforce this possible conclusion, had the Administration used a matrix, similar to the one in Chapter One, to compare American and North Vietnamese interests, our policies may well have been quite different. An example is shown below.

Chart 5.3
NATIONAL INTEREST MATRIX-U.S. AND NORTH VIETNAM

Country: U.S./N.V.N.	Issue: Vietnam			
Basic Interest at Stake	Intensity of Interest			
	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of homeland	NVN		US	
Economic well-being		NVN		US
Favorable world order		US/NVN		
Ideological	NVN	US		

This type of analysis is not very scientific, however, its usage or usage of a method similar to it may well have changed the course of action the Johnson Administration pursued and may well have changed the course of history.

VI. NIXON'S WAR AND PEACE

A. NIXON AT THE HELM

In the years before becoming President, Richard M. Nixon had defended the American commitment in Vietnam and had led the right-wing Republican attack on President Truman for "losing" China to the Communists.

During the domestic debate over Vietnam in 1967, Nixon had argued that the presence of American combat forces in Southeast Asia had been instrumental in checking Chinese expansion by allowing the other nations in that region to develop stable government institutions. "Whatever one may think of the domino theory," he asserted, "it is beyond question that without the American commitment in Vietnam, Asia would be a far different place today."[156] Thus, to Nixon the fate of non-Communist Vietnam was important, and an American commitment to see the struggle through was essential for United States security.

However, after the TET offensive of January 1968, the American leadership was faced with a much different situation: the loss of domestic support for the war. Thus, as a Presidential candidate, Richard M. Nixon suggested that the thrust of American diplomacy be directed against Moscow, who he felt had a great deal of leverage with the North Vietnamese leadership. In a draft speech

he intended to deliver in an evening radio address scheduled for March 31, 1968, Mr. Nixon observed:

> Today, the Soviet Union and the Communist states of Eastern Europe are providing fully 85 percent of the sophisticated weapons for North Vietnam and 100 percent of the oil. It is Soviet SAM'S and Soviet anti-aircraft guns that are shooting down American planes. It is Soviet artillery that is pounding the Marine fortress at Khe Sanh. Without Soviet military assistance, the North Vietnamese war machine would grind to a halt.
>
> The Johnson Administration has made a fundamental error in basing its policies toward the Soviet Union on the wishful assumption that the Soviets want an early end to the war in Vietnam. Not the small, primitive state of North Vietnam, but its great Soviet ally and protector inhibits the full exercise of America's military power. Not even the proximity of Red China's massive armies is as powerful a deterrent to U.S. actions as the presence of Soviet freighters in the port of Haiphong. North Vietnam can hold out stubbornly for total victory because it believes it has total Soviet backing. Yet Washington's desire for a broad political accommodation with the Soviet Union - for detente - arouses a will to ignore or to minimize that backing.
>
> Hanoi is not Moscow's puppet, but it must remain a respectful client in order to keep Soviet aid flowing and to balance the influence of nearby Beijing. If the Soviets were disposed to see the war ended and a compromise settlement negotiated, they have the means to move Ho Chi Minh to the conference table.[157]

Later in the campaign, candidate Nixon expounded on his intended course of action by explicitly stating that he would aggressively move on a number of fronts to increase the chances of meaningful negotiations and the survival of South Vietnam. In September of 1968, Mr. Nixon declared he had a plan to end the conflict and in the following month he stated: "what is needed now is not further military escalation, but rather a dramatic escalation of

our efforts in the often-neglected nonmilitary aspects of the struggle--political, economic, psychological and diplomatic.[158]

While Nixon was justifying America's involvement in the war and calling for a negotiated settlement, Henry Kissinger was also calling for a negotiated conclusion to the conflict.

> However we got into Vietnam, whatever the judgment of our action, ending the war honorably is essential for the peace of the world. Any other solution may unloose forces that would complicate the prospects of international order.[159]

By an honorable settlement, several essential conditions had to be met. The American withdrawal from Vietnam had to be conducted in a way that avoided even the slightest appearance of defeat, there was not to be any face-saving political settlement designed merely to permit a graceful U.S. exit from Vietnam. Kissinger explicitly rejected the idea of a coalition government, which he said would "destroy the existing political structure and thus lead to a Communist takeover." Nixon and Kissinger set as their optimum goal a "fair negotiated settlement that would preserve the independence of South Vietnam." At a minimum, they insisted on a settlement that would give South Vietnam a reasonable chance to survive.[160]

Once in the White House, President Nixon ordered a complete reevaluation of the political and military situation in South Vietnam, While he hoped that

diplomacy could end the war, he did not reject the possibility of using military power to achieve his objective of 'peace with honor.' His diplomatic efforts were envisioned to be a transformation from confrontation to cooperation and detente in America's relations with Moscow and Beijing. Through these efforts he hoped to be able to pressure Hanoi to seek a negotiated settlement.

Through French intermediaries, Nixon sent a message to the North Vietnamese leadership expressing his sincere desire to conclude a peace. He proposed a mutual withdrawal of American and North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam and the restoration of the DMZ as a boundary between north and south. At the same time, Kissinger was briefing Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin on America's position and expressing the Administration's desire for negotiations with the Russians on such topics as detente, SALT and other important issues, however, he warned that a settlement had to be achieved in Vietnam first. In an effort to put teeth in the American position of using power if need be, Nixon ordered the bombing of Viet Cong/North Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia.

In an effort to develop unity on the domestic front, the President pursued a parallel public strategy to his secret diplomatic efforts. In May 1969 he unveiled the peace plan he had privately made to the North Vietnamese and he made plain his intention to terminate America's

involvement in the war. In June he met with South Vietnamese President Thieu on Midway Island and immediately thereafter announced the withdrawal of 25,000 American combat troops.

The President's peace initiatives failed to elicit any concessions from the North Vietnamese, and his parallel policy to contain opposition at home likewise failed.

In July 1969, two events took place. The first was the enunciation of the Nixon Doctrine on Guam on 26 July 1969. Setting forth the doctrine as principles guiding future American policy toward Asia, Nixon declared:

> First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments.
>
> Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security.
>
> Third, in cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility for its own defense.[161]

The second event was the improvisation of a go-for-broke strategy by the President. It was to be an all-out attempt to "end the war one way or the other--either by negotiated agreement or by force." Again through French intermediaries, Nixon sent a personal message to Ho Chi Minh, reiterating his desire for a "just peace," but adding an ultimatum: unless some progress toward a settlement were made by November 1 he would have no choice

but to resort to "measures of great consequence and force." Kissinger again spoke wtih Dobrynin, warning that "as far as Vietnam is concerned, the train has just left the station and is now headed down the track."[162]

The President, at this time, also ordered Kissinger and an NSC group to draw up contingency plans for use of American military power.

The President's ultimatum to North Vietnam fell on deaf ears. The only result was the North Vietnamese agreed to secret talks between Kissinger and Xuan Thuy.

Unable to extract any concessions from the North Vietnamese and faced with choosing between a military escalation and an embarrassing retreat, the President was persuaded not to use military power because Kissinger's study group had concluded that air strikes and blockade would probably not have forced concessions from Hanoi, and Secretary of Defense Laird and Secretary of State Rogers felt it would have further inflamed opposition on the domestic front.

In late October British counterinsurgency expert, Sir Robert Thompson told President Nixon that the South Vietnamese were daily growing stronger and that within two years could bear the burden of the war if they were abundantly supplied with American arms, training, and economic aid. President Nixon eagerly embraced Thompson's conclusions and announced his new policy: Vietnamization.

B. VIETNAMIZATION

In a major radio and television address to the nation on November 3, 1969, President Nixon defended the American commitment in Vietnam, warning that a pull-out would produce a bloodbath in South Vietnam and a crisis of confidence in American leadership at home and abroad. He openly appealed for the support of those he labeled the "great silent majority," and he concluded with a dramatic warning: "North Vietnam cannot humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that." In the speech he elaborated on the Vietnamization policy stating in part:

> We have adopted a plan which we have worked out in cooperation with the South Vietnamese for the complete withdrawal of all U.S. combat ground forces, and their replacement by South Vietnamese forces on an orderly scheduled timetable. This withdrawal will be made from strength and not from weakness. As South Vietnamese forces become stronger, the rate of American withdrawal can become greater.[163]

President Nixon's speech was a very shrewd and successful pronouncement. By offering a solution to a difficult situation whereby an honorable peace could be achieved with a decreasing American sacrifice, he managed to stabilize the domestic front. His call on the nation's patriotism and dislike to anything resembling defeat coupled with his identifiication of a silent majority, enabled him to mobilize a bloc of support where none had existed before. By the end of November the President's popular support had risen dramatically and numerous Nixon rallies were held in several cities.

In response to Nixon's Veitnamization speech, Saigon established a national goal entitled Ba Tu. which translated roughly to "Three Selves"--self-recovery, self-powering, self-sustaining.[164]

Vietnamization, as envisioned by the Administration, consisted of two principal components. President Nixon concisely summarized the new American policy:

> We thus developed the Vietnamization program in close cooperation with the government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN). This policy was designed to strengthen the armed forces and the people of South Vietnam so that they could defend themselves. As their forces increased in numbers, equipment, combat skills, and leadership, they progressively assumed responsibility for their own defense. The process also involved the extension of governmental authority in the countryside through the pacification program, the growth of economic capacities, the development of political institutions--all the elements that would allow South Vietnam to stand on its own.[165]

The first component of Vietnamization, strengthening the armed forces of the South Vietnamese, proved to be relatively easy to achieve. With proper funding and transportation, a large-scale arms transfer took place. This was coupled with a vigorous training program that had been designed to develop the necessary skills and techniques for fighting a war. The biggest constraint on this component of Vietnamization was time. The two year time-frame suggested by Sir Robert Thompson proved to be quite accurate.

Pacification, the second component of Vietnamization, posed a real challenge. The basic objective of

pacification was to remove the reasons for revolution. In order to accomplish this, what was needed was the development of a stronger economy, the removal of corruption, the providing of security and essential services, creation of a spirit of national unity and promotion of better health standards. Pacification was something that had to be accomplished by the South Vietnamese, it was their responsibility to nation-build. It was their responsibility to win the hearts and minds of the people. This task was difficult, at best, however for Vietnamization to work it was as essential as the strengthening of their armed forces.

Vietnamization had both positive and a negative aspect to it. The positive aspect was summed up by Douglas Pike: "The pacification program, which previously had not been taken seriously, gradually assumed major significance for the Communists. A full-scale attack on it is now under way.... [166] By the end of 1971, Hanoi's leadership concluded that its primary task was to frustrate the Vietnamization plan. The negative aspect of Vietnamization was that as America began drawing down its combat forces from Vietnam without any progress in the Paris peace talks, the less incentive Hanoi had to reach any agreement at all. However, the more U.S. troop presence diminished, the more intensely President Nixon insisted that the war end through a negotiated settlement. The President's hoped for

breakthrough in Paris as a result of his November 3 speech never materialized. He became increasingly impatient for some concrete results and further convinced that he could end the war by a dramatic show of force. Once again the President began looking for "initiatives" that might be undertaken to "show the enemy that we were still serious about our commitments in Vietnam."[167] The President's opportunity to do just that emerged in early 1970.

C. CAMBODIAN INCURSION AND LAM SON 719

In June 1969, the United States and Cambodia had agreed to resume diplomatic relations after a four year rupture.

In late 1969, an internal crisis emerged between Sihanouk and Prime Minister Lon Nol over the presence of North Vietnamese/Viet Cong sanctuaries in Cambodia.

While Sihanouk was on an extended trip abroad, Lon Nol issued an ultimatum giving the Communist forces in the sanctuaries three days to get out. Angry crowds, in Phnom Penh, sacked the North Vietnamese embassy and during this turmoil, on March 18, 1970, Sihanouk was ousted in a bloodless coup.

The North Vietnamese/Viet Cong almost immediately set out to secure a strip of land along the South Vietnamese border quickly eliminating virtually all Cambodian opposition.

From Washington, General Abrams was directed to outline several contingency plans for military action in

Cambodia by ARVN forces alone and with U.S. forces. Kissinger was given the task of assembling the plans and assessing the consequences.

In mid April, Defense Secretary Laird expressed his opposition to any cross-border operations involving American forces because of the chance of increased U.S. casualties, loss of support for Vietnamization, and a deepening of political division in the United States. Secretary of State Rogers also opposed such a move, he felt it would have destroyed a number of diplomatic efforts that were underway.

A crucial NSC meeting took place on April 26. In attendance were Nixon, Kissinger, Laird, Rogers, Attorney General Mitchell, CIA Director Helms, and General Wheeler.

Secretary Rogers opposed any incursion, however, he knew the President was determined to do something, so he proposed using only ARVN forces. Secretary Laird and General Wheeler felt the Communist forces were determined to overthrow Lon Nol and establish a safe sea supply route through Eastern Cambodia. Furthermore, they pointed out that if only ARVN ground forces were used, they would need U.S. air and logistics support. When President Thieu was apprised of the situation, he said his ARVN troops must have U.S. advisors.[168]

On the morning of April 28, President Nixon gave the order authorizing U.S. forces to attack the Fish Hook area

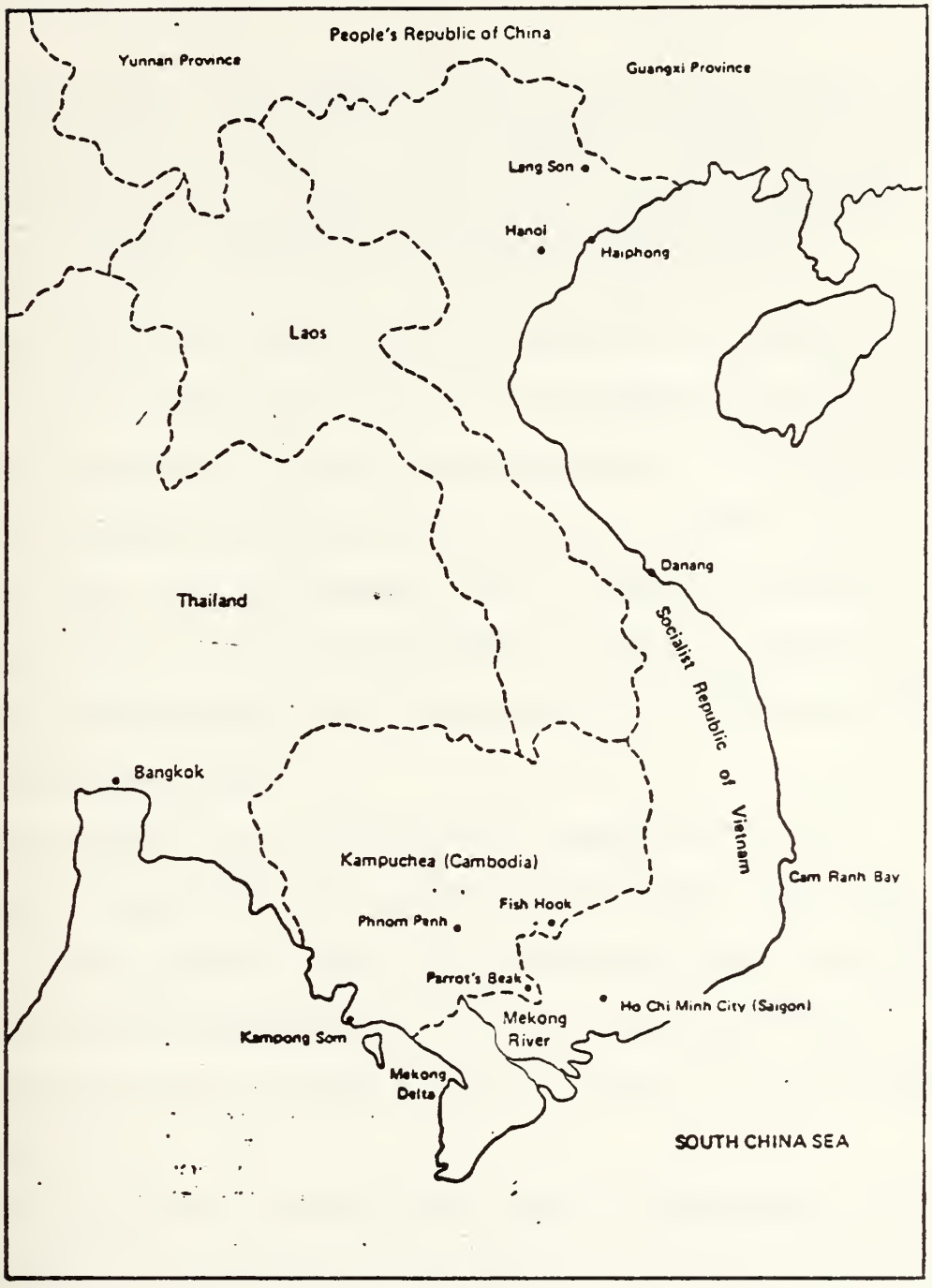
and authorized advisors to accompany ARVN forces into the Parrot's Beak (See map on the next page for the location of these two areas). In addition to these incursions into Cambodia, Nixon ordered air strikes against the enemy sanctuaries as well as four bombing raids against the North.

President Nixon ordered these actions in an effort to strike a crippling blow at the North Vietnamese/Viet Cong ability to launch an offensive against the Saigon government which in turn would buy time for Vietnamization, he also hoped these forces would be successful in capturing COSVN, the National Liberation Front's Central Office for South Vietnam, and he hoped to induce the North Vietnamese to offer some concessions which could lead to a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

Domestic reaction to the Cambodian incursion was fast and furious. Demonstrations on campuses throughout the country erupted and at Kent State and Jackson State Colleges six students were killed. Congress began to exert pressure on the President who on May 6, said all U.S. forces would be withdrawn from Cambodia by June 30. On June 30, the Cooper-Church Amendment was passed, 75-20, cutting off all funding for Cambodian operations.[169]

In an effort to quell foreign and domestic dissent, the President, in October, launched what he described as a "major new peace initiative."[170] The President offered

Source: Richard Solomon, ed., Asian Security in the 1980's: Problems and Policies for a Time of Transition



Southeast Asia

no new concessions on fundamental issues, and Hanoi promptly rejected the initiative.

Politically, the President was in a precarious situation. There was a total deadlock at the Paris peace talks and the NSC

> concluded that the United States could neither persuade nor force Hanoi to remove its troops from the south.... By the end of the year...intelligence reported a sharp increase in the infiltration of men and supplies into Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam, posing an ominous threat to the northern provinces and Hue where sizeable American forces had been withdraw.[171]

The President sped up the withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam in an effort to appease critics at home and once again, as he had done before, he stepped up military pressure against North Vietnam. Heavy air strikes were launched against enemy supply lines and staging areas in Laos and Cambodia as well as against bridges, base camps, and trails across the DMZ and in the Hanoi-Haiphong area.

In February 1971, Nixon again expanded the war, authorizing LAM SON 719--a major ground operation into Laos. This operation was to be conducted only with ARVN forces backed up by American air and logistics support. The operation was at best a draw, at worst an unmitigated disaster.

The operation had been designed to accomplish similar objectives to the Cambodian incursion, i.e., buy time for Vietnamization and to disrupt enemy supply lines enough to

preclude a Communist offensive during the coming dry season. General Giap, leader of the North Vietnamese forces, threw virtually all the forces he had available into the battle in order to discredit Vietnamization. Although the operation had apparently succeeded in upsetting North Vietnamese plans for a dry season offensive, heavy casualties were inflicted on the ARVN forces. Domestic reaction was once again strong and negative.

Following LAM SON 719, Kissinger again began a new round of secret talks. At this meeting he offered two new inducements to the American position. The U.S. would settle for a cease-fire-in-place and would withdraw all American forces from Vietnam within six months of signing an agreement. The second inducement was that President Thieu would resign thirty days prior to a national plebiscite to determine the political future of South Vietnam. Le Duc Tho, who had joined the secret negotiations in February 1970, rejected the American proposal.

A month later Le Duc Tho secretly offered a nine point plan to end the war. Although Kissinger rejected this plan he felt that a breakthrough might be in the offing. However, on July 1, 1971, the PRG publicly offered a seven point plan on a settlement in South Vietnam.[172]

> To those privy to the secret negotiations, however, the PRG proposal was not so much a negotiating document as it was a tactic to encourage doubts about the Nixon Administration's sincerity in seeking an end to the war. When Kissinger called Le Duc Tho to clarify which of the two proposals now on the table should serve as the basis

> for future secret discussions, Tho replied that the secret proposal was the basis for future discussions. This confirmed the fears of Kissinger's aides that Hanoi would leapfrog its public and private positions and that a breakthrough in the negotiations had not occurred.[173]

By November, the talks again collapsed when the North Vietnamese refused to continue the Kissinger-Tho dialogue. This was an ominous development because it meant that American strategy had once again failed, and because intelligence showed a North Vietnamese build-up for a new offensive.

D. MARCH 1972 OFFENSIVE

After the breakdown of the secret talks in November 1971, President Nixon once again went on national television and radio to announce that there had been secret negotiations. The President discussed the secret negotiation being carried on with Hanoi and believed that if Americans showed unity it would enable the negotiations to resume.[174]

A day after the President's speech, Kissinger proposed another secret meeting with the North Vietnamese, which they accepted several weeks later by suggesting a mid-March date to meet.

In the meantime the Politburo in Hanoi was making the final preparations for an invasion of the South, a decision they apparently had reached in early 1971. The North Vietnamese objective was to hold off the attack until the

majority of U.S. ground forces had been removed from Vietnam and to strike before the ARVN forces were strong enough to resist unaided.

Intelligence sources estimated that the North Vietnamese would be recovered enough from the losses suffered during LAM SON 719 by the end of 1971. On the other hand the North Vietnamese estimated that American domestic constraints would preclude the reintroduction of American ground forces. One final consideration that apparently went into the North Vietnamese thinking was the timing of the upcoming offensive. It was scheduled for March 1972 in order to coincide with the American presidential election in hopes of producing an effect similar to that of the TET offensive of 1968.

The offensive itself was aimed at the ARVN forces directly in order to achieve total victory or at least discredit Vietnamization, to tie down regular South Vietnamese troops, to free the Viet Cong to renew its offensive and disrupt the pacification program, and to strengthen its position for the final negotiations based on a cease-fire-in-place.

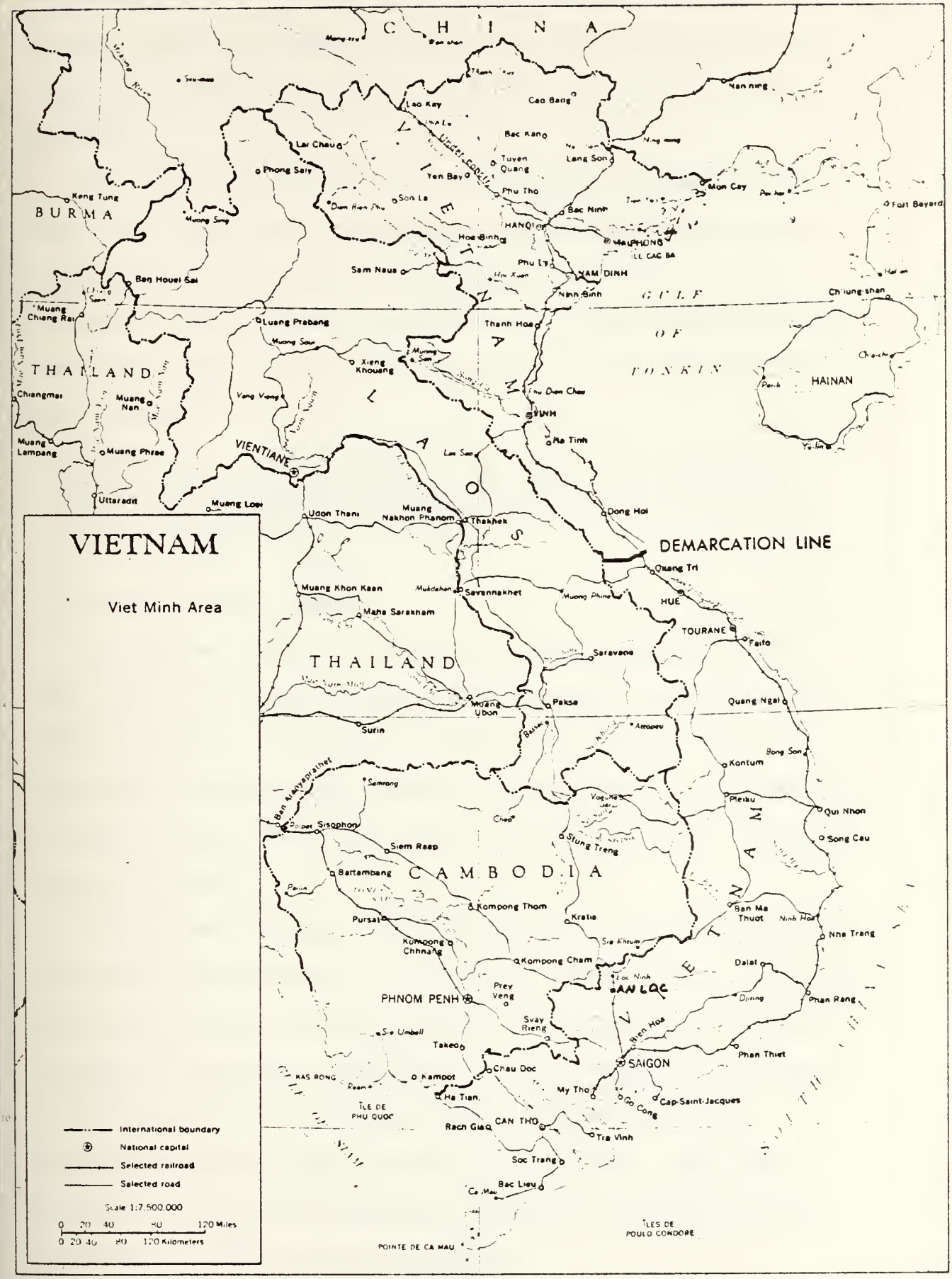
On 29 March, the North Vietnamese launched their offensive. In the initial stages, the offensive was an unqualified success. Attaining near total surprise with the scope and swiftness of the attack, the NVA quickly routed the ARVN defense lines near Quang Tri in the north,

Kontum in the highlands, and An Loc just sixty miles north of Saigon (See map on following page).

America's response to the invasion was swift and devastating. President Nixon ordered B-52 strikes across the DMZ and air strikes on fuel depots in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. While these attacks were being carried out, Kissinger met privately with Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev. "He stated emphatically that the United States held the Soviet Union responsible for the invasion, and he warned that a continuation of the war could severely damage Soviet-American relations and have grave consequences for North Vietnam."[175] This message was also relayed to Le Duc Tho a few days later.

Sensing victory in their grasp, the North Vietnamese flatly rejected the American ultimatum. On May 8, 1972, the President announced the mining of Haiphong Harbor, the naval blockade of North Vietnam, and the massive, sustained bombing attacks.[176] The Russian reaction was mild. They did not cancel the Brezhnev-Nixon summit scheduled for May, as anticipated by Laird and Rogers, but continued to aid the North Vietnamese while sending a delegation to pressure Hanoi to sue for peace. The Chinese protested Nixon's escalation of the war but also sent a delegation to pressure Hanoi.

Domestic reaction was relatively mild in comparison to the Cambodian issue. Apparently the American public considered bombing a more acceptable alternative to ground


VIETNAM
Viet Minh Area
International boundary
National capital
Selected railroad
Selected road
Scale 1:7,500,000
0 20 40 80 120 Miles
0 20 40 80 120 Kilometers
CHINA
BURMA
THAILAND
LAOS
VIETNAM
CAMBODIA
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
DEMARCATION LINE
HANOI
HAIPHONG
NAM DINH
VINH
HUE
TOURANE
VIENTIANE
PHNOM PENH
SAIGON
AN LOC
CAN THO
Lao Kay
Cao Bang
Bac Kan
Lang Son
Tuyen Quang
Yen Bay
Phu Tho
Bac Ninh
Hoa Binh
Phu Ly
Ninh Binh
Thanh Hoa
Phu Dien Chau
Ha Tinh
Dong Hoi
Quang Tri
Faifo
Quang Ngai
Kontum
Pleiku
Qui Nhon
Song Cau
Nha Trang
Phan Rang
Phan Thiet
Dalat
Bien Hoa
Cap-Saint-Jacques
Go Cong
My Tho
Tra Vinh
Soc Trang
Bac Lieu
Ca Mau
Rach Gia
Ha Tien
Kampot
Takeo
Svay Rieng
Prey Veng
Kompong Cham
Kompong Chhnang
Pursat
Kompong Thom
Battambang
Siem Reap
Sisophon
Stung Treng
Kratie
Pakse
Saravane
Savannakhet
Thakhek
Muang Nakhon Phanom
Udon Thani
Muang Loei
Muang Phrae
Muang Lampang
Chiangmai
Muang Nan
Chiang Rai
Luang Prabang
Xieng Khouang
Sam Naua
Phong Saly
Lai Chau
Son La
Keng Tung
Muang Sing
Ban Houei Sai
Muang Khon Kaen
Maha Sarakham
Muang Ubon
Surin
Ban Aranyaprathet
Samrong
Chau Doc
Ha Tien
Ile de Phu Quoc
Kas Rong
Pointe de Ca Mau
Iles de Poulo Condore
Nanning
Mon Cay
Fort Bayard
Ch'iung-shan
Yu-lin
Lao Sao
Muong Phine
Attopeu
Bong Son
Ninh Hoa
Djiring
Loc Ninh
Sie Khtum
Sie Umbell
Ream
Pailin
Samrong
Chea
Vogune
Pakse
Bassac
Mukdahan
Vang Vieng
Muong Soui
Muong Sen
Lao Kay
Under Constr.

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troops. Polls showed that the North Vietnamese invasion justified Nixon's response and public approval ratings rose markedly.

The American response to the North Vietnamese attack was by far the most concentrated and devastating attack, to date, against the North. Although the NVA and the ARVN forces suffered heavy casualty rates, intelligence reports indicated that the NVA had the capacity to fight for two more years.[177]

> Frustrated in their hopes of breaking the diplomatic stalemate by military means, by the fall of 1972 each side found compelling reasons to attempt to break the military deadlock by diplomacy.[178]

E. PEACE? WAR? PEACE?

The secret Kissinger-Tho talks were resumed in late July 1972. The talks inched along slowly throughout late summer towards a compromise while the United States continued its military pressure against Hanoi, although at a substantially lower level than during the North Vietnamese March offensive.

The United States, having already shown a willingness to allow the NVA to remain in the South, took a major step away from its absolute support for Thieu by agreeing to accept a tripartite electoral commission. This body was to consist of the Saigon government, the People's Revolutionary Government (Viet Cong), and the neutralists. The North Vietnamese, on the other hand, appeared to withdraw their insistence on the removal of Thieu.

On September 11, the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) released an important statement that portended an end to the war.[179] At a secret meeting with Tho four days later, Kissinger said that one important aspect of the PRG statement, the implied removal of Thieu by the United States government, was unacceptable to President Nixon. Kissinger urged the North Vietnamese to be flexible on this point which in turn could lead to a settlement.[180]

On September 26, 1972, at the next secret meeting Le Duc Tho broke the deadlock. He proposed a tripartite National Council of Reconciliation and Concord that would have three equal segments but not be considered a government. On October 8, what appeared to be a major breakthrough in the Paris talks was achieved when Le Duc Tho presented Kissinger with an english version draft agreement that the North Vietnamese were ready to sign. Within three days all but two issues were resolved and the two negotiators agreed to leave these until later, and that after consultations with Nixon and Thieu, Kissinger would proceed to Hanoi on October 22 to initial the treaty.

On October 17, Kissinger returned to Paris and held a session of talks with Xuan Thuy before proceeding to Saigon to discuss the agreement with Thieu. Three days later, President Nixon informed Hanoi that the draft agreement was acceptable to the United States provided Saigon's acceptance was obtained. Meanwhile, between

October 19 and October 23, Kissinger was in Saigon going over the agreement item by item with President Thieu.

Thieu and his advisors noted over 100 textual changes "that were essential before the document could be signed by the GVN."[181] By October 23, Kissinger and Thieu had narrowed the discrepancies down to six. It appeared as if President Thieu was leaning towards initialing the agreement. However, after an interview of North Vietnam's premier Pham Van Dong by Newsweek in which the premier referred to the tripartite National Council of Reconciliation and Concord as an "arrangement for a three-sided coalition of transition...,"[182] Thieu flatly refused to sign the agreement because he was told by Kissinger that no coalition government had been agreed to.

Kissinger urged President Nixon to go ahead with the agreement without Saigon's approval. However, Nixon apparently shared in some of Thieu's reservations about the October draft. By this time Nixon was assured of victory in the election and decided a short delay could strengthen the American position once he was duly re-elected.

In an effort to keep the talks alive, on October 26 Kissinger declared that peace was at hand.

On November 20, the Kissinger-Tho talks resumed. At the first meeting Kissinger brought up some sixty points for renegotiation. Angrily the North Vietnamese rejected Kissinger's proposals and revived the issue of the ouster

of Thieu. Kissinger and Tho sparred back and forth throughout the remainder of November and into early December.

On December 13, Tho returned to Hanoi via Moscow and Beijing. The next day Nixon issued an ultimatum that if serious negotiations were not renewed within seventy-two hours, Hanoi would have to face the consequences. When the ultimatum expired, President Nixon ordered the beginning of operation Linebacker II, which lasted from December 18 to December 30.

Linebacker II was the single most devastating military operation of the Vietnam war. Hanoi and Haiphong were ravaged and Gia Lam airport was totally destroyed. The Soviets and the Chinese reacted angrily to the bombing, and domestic reaction was "one of shock and anger."[183] All President Nixon required from Hanoi to stop the bombing was the resumption of the peace talks, Hanoi complied.

Between January 8 and January 13 Kissinger and Tho hammered out a final agreement. On the 15th the bombing of the North was completely halted and on January 23, 1973, Kissinger and Tho initialed the final agreement.

On January 27, the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam[184] was formally signed.

F. THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The reality of the January 1973 agreement was that it did not end the war. All it did was enable the United States to withdraw its ground forces and extract its POW's. America's involvement in the war, however, continued in the form of air strikes against sanctuaries and the Ho Chi Minh trail in Cambodia.

President Nixon made firm commitments to Saigon in terms of military equipment, economic aid and the use of American air power in the event of North Vietnamese overt aggression.

The Administration attempted to use every bit of leverage at its disposal to check any North Vietnamese attempt to upset the delicate balance of power in the South. Nixon warned that unless Hanoi lived up to the letter of the agreement, the United States would withhold the over four billion dollar aid and reconstruction package earmarked for North Vietnam.

The Hanoi government ignored the President's warning and by the middle of the summer Congress severely curtailed the President's ability to threaten, denouncing the aid to North Vietnam as reparations and by cutting off funding for air operations in Cambodia. Most of this Congressional action was as a result of mounting evidence of White House involvement in the Watergate scandal.

As the Watergate investigations began to reveal abuses of presidential power, Congress took on the President directly. Congress passed a bill terminating funding for all military operation in Indochina. Although the House upheld Nixon's veto, he was forced to accept an August 15, 1973 cut-off date.

By the end of 1973 President Nixon was all but powerless. Congress, in November, had over-ridden his veto on the War Powers Act and when coupled with the Watergate scandal and the vote terminating operations in Indochina, direct American involvement in Vietnam came to a virtual end.

The military situation in South Vietnam, by the fall of 1974, had decidedly shifted in favor of North Vietnam. ARVN forces had been forced into a defensive posture by severe cut backs in American aid from $2.3 billion in 1973 to $1.0 billion in 1974, while the NVA and PRG had mobilized large units in the South. Vast quantities of supplies were stockpiled in preparation for a new offensive in 1975 or 1976.

On August 9, 1974 President Nixon was forced to resign leaving it up to his successor to preside over the demise of South Vietnam.

G. CONCLUSIONS

To Richard Nixon the fate of a non-Communist South Vietnam was important. He felt America's commitment had

enabled the rest of Southeast Asia to develop stable governments which otherwise would not have had time to form, and he felt it was imperative for American credibility and prestige to see the war through to a successful conclusion.

> When we assumed the burden of helping defend South Vietnam millions of South Vietnamese...placed their trust in us. To abandon them now would risk a massacre that would shock and dismay everyone in the world who values human life.
>
> Abandoning the South Vietnamese people...would jeopardize more than lives in South Vietnam. It would threaten our longer term hopes for peace in the world. A great nation cannot renege on its pledges. A great nation must be worthy of trust.
>
> When it comes to maintaining peace, prestige is not an empty word. I am not talking of false pride or bravado--they should have no place in our policies. I speak rather of the respect that one nation has for another's integrity in defending its principles and meeting its obligations.[185]

He hoped the war could be concluded through negotiations.

Once he realized the intransigience of Hanoi, and desirous to withdraw American forces due to domestic considerations, Nixon opted for a two-tier system under the title of Vietnamization.

The program appeared to be rather successful, at least on the surface. Nixon was encouraged by Sir Robert Thompson's assessment of the political situation that was developing as the program progressed. However, the President was concerned with the continued lack of progress in the negotiations and the supply build-up by the Communist forces in Cambodia and later in Laos.

A policy he pursued in order to attempt to maintain domestic support was to publicly announce private negotiations when they became deadlocked. Shortly after these announcements he generally took overt military action to get the negotiations back on track. The problem lay in the fact that Hanoi knew America would continue its withdrawal regardless of the results of negotiation. Once American ground forces were removed, Hanoi would only have to deal with the Saigon government.

The military actions in Cambodia and Laos caused domestic unrest. This factor further encouraged North Vietnam to drag its feet on any agreement while preparing for yet another offensive. After each of the two military operations the U.S. offered further inducements to get the Hanoi leadership to negotiate a 'just' peace. Each time America conceded something and received nothing in return.

After the talks broke down late in 1971 the President again went before the nation and described the lack of progress. Once the March 1972 offensive was launched the President responded with strong military force. North Vietnam had apparently guessed wrong because unlike the 1968 reaction to TET, the American people supported the President's response to North Vietnamese aggression.

The severity of the response in all likelihood led to the October breakthrough in the peace talks. But, as these talks ground to a halt, Nixon issued an ultimatum

which went unheeded. The American military response was by far the most severe of the entire Vietnam war.

Domestic reaction to the Linebacker II operation backed the President into a precarious corner, however, Hanoi's agreement to renew the talks in early January 1973 took the President off the hook.

After the agreement was signed the President, in his May 3, 1973 report to Congress, stated: "(1) The agreement corresponded to our overall approach..., (2) the agreement included the basic features of our earlier peace plans..., and (3) the settlement respresent(ed) a compromise by both sides."[186]

In reality, a look at the evolution of the peace talks clearly shows that the United States continually conceded on one point after another without inducing the North Vietnamese to respond. A good in depth analysis of the peace talks can be found in Allen E. Goodman's The Lost Peace.

Shortly after the agreement was signed, the Nixon Administration began to become unraveled. Watergate broke, Congress became hostile towards any continuation of American involvement in the war and the American people wanted to put the whole affair out of sight and out of mind.

> More than any other single issue, Vietnam brought a premature end to the Nixon Presidency. The extreme measures he took to defend his Vietnam policy against

enemies real and imagined led directly to the Watergate scandals which eventually forced his resignation. Thus, when the final Vietnam crisis came in 1975, the architect of 'peace with honor' was no longer in the White House and the nation was in no mood to defend the peace he had constructed at such great cost.[187]

In looking at our national interest matrix and assessing Nixon's views on Vietnam, the outlook during his Administration would probably have looked like this.

Chart 6.3
NATIONAL INTEREST MATRIX-NIXON

Country: U.S.	Issue: Vietnam			
Basic Interest at Stake	Intensity of Interest			
	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of homeland				X
Economic well-being				X
Favorable world order		X		
Ideological			X	

To the President, South Vietnam's survival was a vital interest of the United States. Time and again he rejected a precipitous withdrawal of American forces. He continually insisted on allowing time for Vietnamization to take hold and was not remiss in using American air and ground power when needed to achieve his goal of 'peace with honor.'

Through his efforts of world diplomacy vis-a-vis Russia and China, defense of the American homeland was downgraded from a major interest to a peripheral interest. This was accomplished primarily by the opening of relations with the

People's Republic of China (PRC), and the pursuit of detente with not only the PRC but also the Soviet Union.

Economically, Vietnam had long ago fallen by the wayside as even a major interest. The drain on the American economy, particularly since the Johnson Administration, had led to an inflationary trend in the United States that exists even today.

In terms of an ideological interest, again the pursuit of detente coupled with the acceptance, in Washington circles, of the reality of the Sino-Soviet rift, the war was no longer perceived in bi-polar terms, i.e., East against West.

To Nixon, Vietnam was indeed a vital interest, although perhaps in somewhat personal terms. "He emphatically told a group of Congressmen that he would not be the first American President to lose a war.[188]

VII. FORD'S PRESIDENCY

A. THE FIRST SIX MONTHS

On August 6, the United States Senate cut the military aid package to South Vietnam from $1 billion to $700 million. Three days later came the resignation of Richard M. Nixon and the swearing in of Gerald Ford.

With the resignation of Richard Nixon, North Vietnam hoped that the United States would carry out its obligations under Article 21[189] of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam. This article stated, in part: "...the United States will contribute to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam...."[190] These hopes were soon dashed however when President Ford, in an address delivered before a Joint Session of the Congress, on August 12, stated:

> Over the past 5 1/2 years in Congress and as Vice-President, I have fully supported the outstanding foreign policy of President Nixon. This policy I intend to continue.... To our allies and friends in Asia, I pledge a continuity in our support for their security, independence, and economic development.[191]

The economic situation in South Vietnam when President Ford was sworn in was difficult at best. There was a sustained business recession coupled with reduced foreign aid from abroad and increased unemployment which had begun in 1973 and continued on throughout 1974.

Worldwide shortages of grains, petroleum, fertilizer, soybeans, plastics, machinery, and iron and steel products continued to impact heavily on the economy. Domestic inflation skyrocketed 100 percent from the time of the cease-fire to the end of 1974 and foreign exchange reserves declined leading to a decline in non-defensive expenditures. These economic factors along with continuing security problems throughout 1974 led to a marked decline in the morale of the people.

With the widespread inflation there was a reduction in the real value of American assistance to Vietnam which produced serious effects on the fighting capability of the ARVN forces.[192]

The general decline of the economy, morale, and fighting capabilities of the ARVN forces led to political unrest similar to that which had emerged against President Diem during his years in office. In September 1974, an alliance of Buddhists and Catholics against President Thieu emerged. This alliance was known as the National Reconciliation Front. Also in the same month two other events occurred: (1) on September 8, a group of Catholics led by Father Tran Huu Thanh staged a mass demonstration in the city of Hue. This movement, known as the People's Anti Corruption and Peace Building Movement, accused President Thieu and his wife of corruption. (2) The following day, in the lower House of the South Vietnamese

Parliament, the opposition Popular Movement for Struggle against Corruption released a document called Indictment 1. It accused President Thieu of using his presidential powers to acquire several residences and lands in Saigon and in other cities and provinces in the country.

The following month, on October 6, a Catholic-led anti-corruption movement in South Vietnam held the biggest public rally yet in Saigon in the anti-government campaign.[193]

In response to the corruption allegations of these various groups, President Thieu was forced to demote three of his top four Army Corps commanders plus various other officials in his government. However, these moves were not seen as sufficient by the South Vietnamese legislature and on November 2, more than thirty South Vietnamese Congressmen and Senators called for President Thieu's immediate resignation. This was followed up six days later by forty-four opposition leaders appealing to the American Congress to help end alleged government repression and corruption.

As has been shown, the political and economic situation in South Vietnam, between the swearing in of Ford and the end of November 1974, was not good. However, during this time-frame the Administration continued its support for the Thieu regime. In a letter to Thieu in late August, President Ford stated:

> I know you must be concerned by the initial steps taken by Congress on the current fiscal year appropriations ($300 million cut) for both economic and military assistance to the Republic of Vietnam. Our legislative process is a complicated one and it is not yet completed. Although it may take a little time I do want to assure you of my confidence that in the end our support will be adequate on both counts.[194]

From mid-August on the Administration continued to lobby hard for the reinstatement of the $300 million cut the Congress had made. However, in late September, the Congress voted definitively to reduce the Administration's military aid bill to $700 million.

Throughout the remainder of the year, the Administration continued to request Congress to reinstate the cut funds but to no avail. Kissinger insisted that the United States had a moral obligation to South Vietnam and warned that failure to uphold it would have a "corrosive effect on our interests beyond Indochina."[195]

On the military front, the North Vietnamese were well aware of the economic woes of the Thieu government as well as the debate going on in the United States over military and economic aid for the Saigon government. However, a debate appeared to be brewing in the Politburo as well as to priorities i.e., reconstruction versus revolution. The apparent turning point in the internal debate was the widespread demonstrations that emerged in September.[196]

In October 1974, a Politburo policy document surfaced known as The Resolution of 1975. This document, taken by the South Vietnamese off the body of a Communist soldier,

called for moving cautiously and gradually on the battle-field, with negotiations as an interim objective. In essence this document was designed to test American reaction to a limited offensive.

In mid-December 1974, General Viktor Kulikov, Chief of the Soviet Armed Forces visited Hanoi. The last time such a high-ranking Soviet officer had visited Hanoi was just before the 1972 offensive and "in the weeks following the general's visit, seaborne shipments of Soviet war material to North Vietnam increased fourfold in volume, as Moscow gave full aid and comfort to Hanoi in its final offensive."[197]

Shortly after Kulikov left Hanoi, North Vietnam launched its limited offensive. Objective: capture Phuoc Long province. On January 7, 1975, Phuoc Binh city, the capital of Phuoc Long province fell to the North Vietnamese and with it went the entire province (See map on following page). To the Politburo this had been the test of American reflexes. America's reaction, according to a communist commander, was that "the Americans had lost the will, if not the capability, to intervene militarily."[198]

Thus, in early January 1975, the stage was set for what would ultimately be the demise of South Vietnam as a nation.

Source: Frank Swepp, Decent Interval.

B. EXIT SAIGON, ENTER HO CHI MINH CITY

The day following the fall of Phuoc Long Province, the Administration again went before Congress to request the $300 million they had earlier requested. Although it seemed unlikely that Congress would approve these funds, the Administration went to work on public opinion. In an interview on NBC on January 27, 1975, President Ford stated:

> The best estimates of the experts out there, both military and civilian, tell me that $300 million in this fiscal year is the minimum. A year ago when the budget was submitted for military assistance for South Vietnam, it was $1.4 billion. Congress cut it in half, which meant the South Vietnamese rangers going out on patrol instead of having an adequate supply of hand grenades and weapons were cut in half, which of course has undercut their military capability and has made them conserve and not be as strong.
>
> Now, $300 million does not take them back up to where they were or where it is proposed they should be. But the experts say who are on the scene, who have seen the fighting and have looked at the stocks and the reserves, tell me that that would be adequate for the current circumstances.[199]

On the very next day the President once again requested these funds from Congress.

In mid-January Senator Nunn paid a visit to Ambassador Martin in Saigon. The Ambassador felt that with massive American aid, South Vietnam would be independent of the United States in three years. When queried, a member of the Ambassador's staff suggested that for Vietnam to be indpendent of American aid, would depend entirely on how much aid the Soviet Union and China provided Hanoi. If it continued, "we would be in Vietnam forever."[200]

On January 28, President Ford again stated the need for $300 million to prevent serious reversals in South Vietnam. Vice-President Rockefeller said that "further aid reduction would lead to the loss of the country and a bloodbath there, the responsibility for which, would have to be borne by Congress."[201]

By early February, the Communist forces were beginning to threaten Military Region (MR) 2. At about this time Ambassador Martin returned to Washington to lobby for his plan to make South Vietnam independent within three years. All he came away with was a Congressional agreement to send a fact-finding mission to South Vietnam.

Meanwhile, on February 3, Father Tran Huu Thanh issued another public indictment against the Thieu government. Those newspapers that carried the indictment were closed down and many of the reporters involved were arrested on trumped up charges.

As the economic, political and military situation in the South continued to deteriorate, President Ford, in a news conference in Atlanta, warned:

> If the Congress does not respond to the requested additional military assistance for the current fiscal year, an amount which the Congress last year previously authorized, it will certainly complicate the military situation from the point of view of the South Vietnamese.202

In late February the Congressional fact-finding tour arrived in Saigon. On the day of their departure, many of the Congressional members went to Tan Son Nhut air base to

meet with the North Vietnamese and PRG delegates of the Joint Military Team. At the time of their arrival many of them appeared to be unconvinced of the need for the additional moneys requested by the Administration, however, the attempt by the North Vietnamese and PRG delegates to win propaganda points at the meeting backfired leading many of the Congressional people to believe that the additional money was in fact needed. "Their conversion, of course, was to prove a Phyrrhic victory for the Administration, for within a few weeks the rapid deterioration of the South Vietnamese army would render all aid proposals virtually irrelevant."[203]

On March 1, Communist forces moved to cut off the main highway into Ban Me Thuot city (See map on page 153). On March 10, they launched their main attack and two days later the city fell. Another province was now in the hands of the Communist forces. On the same day that Ban Me Thuot fell, Congress again rejected President Ford's request for an additional $300 million in military aid for South Vietnam. It was now quite obvious that the United States was definitively disinclined in involving itself further in South Vietnam.

The day following these two important events, President Thieu told his cabinet of his new strategic policy: "Light at the Top, Heavy at the Bottom."[204] In essence this meant he would abandon Kontum and Gia Lai

provinces in the highlands as well as all of MR 1 except the cities of Hue and Danang.

However, during the battle for Ban Me Thuot, the NVA forces captured the ARVN deputy commander. He apparently informed the NVA commander, General Dung, of what President Thieu would do. After quick consultation with the Politburo, General Dung was authorized to surround the provinces of Kontum and Gia Lai and to attack MR 1 (See map on page 153).

On March 13, President Thieu flew to Cam Ranh Bay to brief the military commander of MR 2 of his new strategy. On the next day the strategic retreat of the highland provinces in MR 2 and MR 1 was begun and only then did the American embassy in Saigon become aware of Thieu's plans.

The North Vietnamese launched their attack against the imperial city of Hue on March 23. The next day the Politburo in Hanoi authorized General Dung to go for total victory before the setting in of the monsoon season.[205] On March 25 Hue fell and the city of Danang was attacked. Four days later the fall of Danang came and with it all of MR 1 was in communist hands as well as the western half of MR 2.

Meanwhile, back in Washington, The National Security Council met on March 25 to discuss the situation in Vietnam. Two plans were outlined. The first called for a continual request to Congress for the $300 million

military aid package and the second suggested waiting for General Weyand's report on his return from assessing the situation in Vietnam and then requesting additional aid from Congress. The decision was made to go with the second plan.[206]

The next day Secretary of State Kissinger told the press:

> We understand that peace is indivisible. The United States cannot pursue a policy of selective reliability. We cannot abandon friends in one part of the world (Vietnam) without jeopardizing the security of friends everywhere.... The problem we face in Indochina is an elementary question of what kind of people we are. For fifteen years we have been involved in encouraging the people of Vietnam to defend themselves against what we conceive as external danger.[207]

He was apparently setting the stage for the stepped up military aid requests that would be sought when General Weyand returned from Vietnam.

On April 10, President Ford went before Congress and after briefly sketching the military situation as described to him by General Weyand, who had since returned from Vietnam, he went on to say:

> The situation in South Vietnam...has reached a critical phase requiring immediate and positive decisions by this government. The options before us are few, and the time is very short. On the one hand the United States could do nothing more.... On the other hand, I could ask the Congress for authority to enforce the Paris Accords with our troops and our tanks and our aircraft and our artillery and carry the war to the enemy. There are two narrower options: First, stick with my January request that Congress appropriate $300 million for military assistance for South Vietnam and seek additional funds for economic and humanitarian

purposes; or increase my requests...to levels which ...might enable the South Vietnamese to stem the on-rushing aggression....[208]

The increased military request the President sought was $722 million.

By the time of the President's speech, the military situation was all but lost. All of MR 1 and MR 2 were now in Communist hands and NVA forces were poised for the final assault on Saigon and MR 3.

Politically, President Thieu was almost completely isolated. His political opponents joined forces with Air Vice-Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky and with Father Thanh they formed the Action Committee for National Salvation. They called on Thieu "to delegate full powers to a new government of new personalities with new policies and effective for national salvation."[209] Thieu responded by arresting seven of its members and accusing them of plotting a coup. However, on two occasions Thieu tried to form new cabinets in an effort to placate his opposition. These attempts resulted in failure.

By early April even Thieu's supporters had turned against him and calls for his departure began to emerge. The pressure to get him to resign mounted as the battle for Xuan Loc, a major provincial capitol east of Saigon, continued. On the day it fell, April 21, Thieu resigned. In his resignation speech he stated:

> The reason I resign today is the fact that today the U.S. Congress is going to scrutinize the problem of aid. I think that after my resignation today, maybe tomorrow the $300 million will be raised to $722 million or to more than $1,000 million, and then a continuous airlift will bring in tanks and heavy artillery...let us wait and see whether the U.S. Congress will do so.[210]

On the day Thieu resigned the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Representative Mahon of Texas, opened the hearings on President Ford's request for additional aid by stating, "The question of aid to South Vietnam is of course, and this is an understatement, highly controversial."[211] In the end, Congress did appropriate $300 million, however, it was earmarked for carrying out the evacuation of American and some Vietnamese personnel. The end of the road in Vietnam was at hand.

On April 30, 1975, the North Vietnamese forces took Saigon and raised the flag of the People's Revolutionary Government at the Presidential Palace. That same day the BBC informed the world that the NVA had taken Saigon and renamed it Ho Chi Minh city.

C. POSTWAR EVENTS

In the aftermath of the Vietnam debacle, the United States chose a wait and see policy geared toward looking towards the future rather than the past, gearing American actions to the behavior of Vietnam towards her neighbors, and also stressing the need to account for those U.S.

servicemen still listed as missing in action (MIA). The policy was clearly stated by President Ford on December 7, 1975, when he enunciated The Pacific Doctrine (For full text see Appendix B):

> In Indochina the healing effects of time are required. Our policies toward the new regimes of the peninsula will be determined by their conduct toward us. We are prepared to reciprocate gestures of good will--particularly the return of remains of Americans killed or missing in action or information about them. If they exhibit restraint toward their neighbors and constructive approaches to international problems, we will look to the future rather than to the past.[212]

At the end of the war there were four major questions that were at issue between the United States and the states of Indochina, particularly Vietnam. These questions were: (1) the admission of Vietnam to the United Nations; (2) Americans missing in action in Indochina; (3) normalization of relations; and (4) reconstruction aid to Indochina.[213] During the remainder of the Ford Administration not one of these issues was ever resolved.

1. The Admission of Vietnam to the United Nations

In August 1975, both North and South Vietnam sought to join the United Nations (UN). The United States cast a solitary veto stating that since the Soviet Union had done the same thing when South Korea had applied, the United States had no alternative but to do likewise and would "have nothing to do with a selective universality."[214]

After the reunification of Vietnam on July 2, 1976, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), as it was now

called, once again sought membership in the United Nations. On September 11, Kissinger, when asked if the U.S. intended to block the admission of the SRV to the U.N., stated:

> The President stated publicly this week that we considered the gesture of releasing the names of twelve Americans missing in action as insufficient. And what we are considering is whether a government that is not fulfilling one of its basic obligations under an international agreement would be able to fulfill its obligations under the U.N. Charter, and this is--we will make our decision when the case actually comes before the Security Council.[215]

Two days later U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Scranton said the United States would veto the SRV's application, so under a French initiative the issue was postponed until November.

When the issue came before the Security Council in November, the U.S. cast its veto against the SRV because of inadequate accounting of the MIA's.

The issue of SRV membership in the U.N. was thus left to the next administration.

2. Americans Missing in Action in Indochina

The House Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia concluded, after fifteen months investigation, that there was no credible evidence that any Americans were still being held captive in Vietnam as a result of the war.[216] Since the MIA issue is directly linked to the next issue, normalization of relations, they will be discussed together.

3. Normalization of Relations

In an interview on the "Today" show a month after the fall of Saigon, Secretary Kissinger was asked if the United States would recognize Vietnam. In response he stated: "We want to observe the conduct of the Vietnamese Government for a while before we make this decision."[217]

On June 4, 1975, Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong noted that the Vietnamese Communists were prepared to establish diplomatic relations with the United States on the basis of the Paris Peace Agreement. This implied a requirement on the United States to carry out the provisions of reconstruction aid, however, on September 2 the Prime Minister apparently softened the Vietnamese position by repeating his call for the normalization of relations without specifically tying it to the question of reconstruction aid.

President Ford and Secretary Kissinger on the other hand called for full accounting of the MIA's and for observing the Vietnamese actions toward its neighbors just as the President was to state three months later in his address in Honolulu on December 7.

In early 1976, the Vietnamese returned the remains of five U.S. servicemen killed in Vietnam followed shortly thereafter by two more. The American position, however, continued to call for a full accounting of the MIA. In a news conference on April 22, 1976, Secretary

Kissinger responded to a question on the prospects of normalization with the Vietnamese by saying:

> We have stated publicly that we are, in principle, prepared to have talks with Hanoi in which each side will be free to raise any issue that it wishes and that then the outcome of these talks can determine whether there is sufficient basis for normalizing relations. As far as we are concerned, the absolute precondition is a complete accounting for the missing in action.[218]

In July 1976, the SRV launched an initiative aimed at normalizing relations with its neighbor nations. This proved quite successful resulting in the establishment of diplomatic relations wtih all members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), consisting of Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Republic of the Philippines. By this initiative, Hanoi removed one of the obstacles towards normalization of relations with the U.S.: Hanoi's behavior toward its neighbors.

On July 22, Secretary Kissinger again stated the Administration's position:

> We have said on many occasions that for us the Indo-China war is over. We are prepared to look to the future, we are willing to discuss outstanding issues; we stand ready to reciprocate gestures of good will. We have conveyed our willingness to open discussions with the Vietnamese authorities with both sides free to raise any issue they wish.
>
> For us the American missing in action remains the principle concern. Let there by no mistake: There can be no progress toward improved relations with Hanoi without a wholly satisfactory accounting for these men. Nor will we yield to cynical efforts to use the anguish of American families to extort economic aid.

> If the Vietnamese meet our concerns for the missing in action...they will find us ready to reciprocate and to join in the search for ways to turn a new page in our relations.[219]

On the same day as Kissinger's address Hanoi agreed to allow all Americans stranded in the country to leave with their Vietnamese families beginning on August 9. On that day 49 Americans and their dependents arrived in Bangkok from the SRV. Subsequent to this gesture, on September 7, the Hanoi government released the names of twelve U.S. servicemen killed in Vietnam. However, in response to this President Ford stated, "Normalization of relations cannot take place until Vietnam accounts for all our men missing in action."[220]

Following the election of Jimmy Carter, Vietnamese and U.S. officials met in Paris on November 12 and held talks designed to bring about friendlier relations. The following day the Vietnamese announced that Vietnam was disposed "to fully fulfill" its obligation on the return of war personnel.[221] Their communique also skirted the issue of reconstruction aid by referring to it as "what had been agreed in the mixed economic commission in Paris in 1973."[222] Thus, when the Carter Administration took office, the process of normalization of relations appeared to be on the move.

4. Reconstruction Aid to Indochina

As mentioned previously, Article 21 of the Paris Agreement obligated the United States "to contribute to

healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (as North Vietnam was called in 1973) and throughout Indochina."

A figure of $3.25 billion was promised by President Nixon in a secret letter to Pham Van Dong. "The Joint Economic Commission" as established by the Paris Agreement, "worked out a program for grant aid to be provided and commodities to be purchased in the United States...over a five year period."[223] However, no agreement was ever formally reached and the issue was never brought before Congress.

As the war dragged on, after the American withdrawal, the U.S. tried to use the issue of reconstruction aid as leverage to stem NVA and VC activities but to no avail. It soon became apparent, in the aftermath of Watergate and the Nixon resignation, that the U.S. Congress would have no part of "reparations."

After the fall of Saigon, the Ford Administration felt that Hanoi's actions leading to total victory had made Article 21 a dead issue.

In January 1976, Senator George McGovern went to Vietnam and through him Hanoi said that it was ready to put these legal contentions (Article 21) behind and accept a new format and amount with which the United States would play "some part" in the rebuilding of the country, as "a matter of honor, responsibility and conscience."[224] In May

Senator Kennedy called for reconciliation and normalization of relations by contributions to the international relief and rehabilitation efforts then underway but, as in the past, the issue of reconstruction aid only generated hostile attention in Washington.

In November 1976, a new President was elected and, as in the case of the other three issues, a new Administration would have to tackle them.

D. CONCLUSIONS

When Gerald Ford was sworn in as President, the economic, political and military situation in South Vietnam was precarious.

After having avowed to carry out the "outstanding foreign policy" of his predecessor, he proceeded to attempt to influence Congress into reappropriating the $300 million that had been cut from the Vietnamese package three days before he assumed office. The attitude of Congress and the American people, for that matter, was such that it proved to be an impossible task. Congress was concerned, not only with continued U.S. involvement in Indochina, but also with domestic economic problems such as inflation and creeping unemployment. The American people were of the opinion that they wanted to forget our involvement in Vietnam.

Once the North Vietnamese had tested the waters of American response to a limited offensive, and after

becoming aware of President Thieu's new strategic policy of "Light at the Top, Heavy at the Bottom," coupled with the domestic pressures leveled against his regime, the decision was reached to go for total victory in 1975. This victory came with a swiftness that clearly showed the disintegration of the South Vietnamese society culminating in the April 30, 1975 fall of Saigon.

In the postwar phase of the Ford Administration four questions were at issue between the United States and Vietnam. They were: (1) admission of Vietnam to the U.N.; (2) Americans missing in action; (3) normalization of relations, and (4) reconstruction aid. As discussed earlier, none of these issues was ever resolved. Vietnam was not admitted to the U.N. because of inadequate accounting of MIA's. The MIA issue and normalization of relations were linked such that to the Ford Administration "the absolute precondition (of normalization) is a complete accounting for the missing in action." With this precondition, Vietnam was required to accomplish an impossible task. The secondary issue for normalization was Hanoi's behavior toward its neighbors. This issue was essentially resolved with the establishment of diplomatic relations between Hanoi and the nations of ASEAN. The issue of reconstruction aid never bore fruit for Hanoi because of their "violations" of the Paris Agreement leading to their takeover of all of Vietnam. Since none of the issues of

the postwar era were ever resolved, they were passed on to the Carter Administration.

Before the fall of Saigon, the Ford Administration's outlook, in terms of our national interest model, is difficult to assess. However, to understand that interest, a look at the world situation would be required. During Ford's time in office the other major international event going on was Kissinger's Middle East shuttle diplomacy that would eventually lead to the Camp David Agreement. Because of the importance of this issue Secretary Kissinger made his acrimonious statement: "The United States cannot pursue a policy of selective reliability. We cannot abandon friends in one part of the world (Vietnam) without jeopardizing the security of friends everywhere...." This would lead one to believe that the Secretary of State was deeply concerned with the image that was being projected by American inaction in Vietnam. In this light, then, Vietnam would have to be perceived as a vital ideological and world order interest.

President Ford's various statements also reflected this point of view. Just after taking office he pledged support for the security, independence and economic development "to our allies and friends in Asia."

In his April 10, 1975 speech to Congress President Ford once again raised the issue of American interest when he stated:

> I am...mindful of our posture toward the rest of the world, and particularly of our future relations with the free nations of Asia. These nations must not think for a minute that the United States is pulling out on them or intends to abandon them to aggression.
>
> I have, therefore, concluded that the national interest of the United States and the cause of world stability require that we continue to give both military and humanitarian assistance to the South Vietnamese.[225]

Thus the matrix during the first half of the Ford Administration would probably look like this:

Chart 7.2
NATIONAL INTEREST MATRIX-FORD

Country: U.S. Issue: Vietnam 1974-75				
Basic Interest at Stake	Intensity of Interest			
	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of homeland				X
Economic well-being				X
Favorable world order		X		
Ideological		X		

In the postwar timeframe of the Ford Administration the United States' vital interests in Indochina evaporated. However, Ford and Kissinger were concerned with the reaction of the nations of the world toward the loss of Vietnam.

> In their comments on the Vietnam debacle, the President and Secretary Kissinger did not fail to express their concern about the way in which America's allies and friends, in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, would view the destruction of a longstanding American protege by hostile forces which the United States itself appeared unwilling to oppose either by force of arms or by timely material aid. Conceding that little if anything could now be done toward saving the Republic of Vietnam in light of the restrictions imposed by Congress

> the two American spokesmen had nevertheless insisted that the Vietnam experience must not be thought to set a precedent for American inaction in other situations that might arise in the future.[226]

This attitude, of not seeing Vietnam as a precedent, was shown to the world during the Mayaguez incident of mid-May 1975. When the container ship Mayaguez was seized by Cambodian patrol boats on May 12, the President moved swiftly to retake it by using American military force. This action was taken to dispel any notions of American inability to respond to international events.

Thus, the Administration's position was that, although Southeast Asia was not a vital interest to the United States, it certainly was a major interest and this is the reason for the American response to the Mayaguez takeover by Cambodia and for the initial linking of normalization of relations with Hanoi's to its conduct toward its ASEAN neighbors.

As for the Administration's policy on the MIA issue, it appears as if the hard stance taken by Ford and Kissinger was an attempt to gain a moral victory over the Hanoi government and even perhaps a reason to withold diplomatic recognition. The witholding of diplomatic relations and the waging of "economic and political warfare against other countries simply because we disagree with their ideology" is not the way to conduct foreign relations. "Especially in the case of smaller countries, it is clearly not in our national interest to force a heavy dependence

on a competetive power."[227] In effect this appears to be exactly what the United States ultimately did.

VIII. THE CARTER TERM

A. THE FIRST YEAR

When the Carter Administration took office in January 1977, they faced the same four issues that had faced the Ford Administration after the fall of the Saigon regime. These four issues were: (1) the admission of Vietnam to the United Nations; (2) Americans missing in action in Indochina; (3) normalization of relations; and (4) reconstruction aid to Indochina.

The first issue, admission of Vietnam to the United Nations, was resolved early on. At his confirmation hearings, Carter's ambassador-designate to the United Nations, Andrew Young "expressed his hope that the United States would permit Vietnam's entry into the UN at its next application and indicated that the administration intended to move forthrightly...."[228]

When the Carter Administration took office it moved definitively to abandon the U.N. membership question as an issue between the United States and Vietnam. During the formal talks with their Vietnamese counterparts, which opened on May 3-4, 1977, the U.S. negotiators pledged that the United States would no longer veto a Vietnamese application for U.N. membership. This pledge was reinforced on May 4 when Secretary of State Vance stated: "We indicated to the Vietnamese that we are prepared not to oppose their admission to the United Nations."[229]

Thus, on July 20, 1977, Vietnam's application to the U.N. was approved by the Security Council without a formal vote and on September 20, the General Assembly formalized Vietnam's membership.

The remaining three issues, the MIA's, normalization of relations, and reconstruction aid will be addressed together as they evolved during the Carter Presidency.

A short month after moving into office, Secretary of State Vance was asked, at a news conference, about his attitude toward bilateral relations between the United States and Vietnam. He responded: "I stated in my confirmation hearings that I thought it was in the interests of both countries to proceed toward normalization of relations, and I hope that we will be able to start the process in the near future."[230] A few days later, President Carter announced that he was sending a five man team to Hanoi in March to seek information on the 1,900 or so Americans still listed as MIA in Vietnam.

The President's announcement was followed up by Secretary Vance's statement: "I have also indicated that we would consider it important to try and come to grips with the missing in action question in Vietnam, so that we could then begin to move toward normalization...."[231]

A few days before the U.S. mission left for Hanoi, the U.S. Select Committee on the Missing Persons in Southeast Asia concluded that a full accounting of all MIA's so

sternly demanded by former President Ford and Secretary Kissinger "is not possible and should not be expected."[232]

Thus, when the mission, led by Leonard Woodcock, arrived in Hanoi on March 16, the American position on the MIA issue had shifted from a full accounting for the MIA's to one of coming "to grips with the missing in action question."

When the five man team returned to the United States, it brought back with it the remains of twelve servicemen and a pledge from Hanoi that a "formal undertaking to give the U.S. all available information on the missing men as it is found and to return remains as they are recovered and exhumed."[233] However, as successful as this mission may have appeared, there were subtle indications that the Vietnamese were still linking information on MIA's to the matter of reconstruction aid. "The...subtle Vietnamese approach had pointed to three key areas of discussion with the United States: the MIA's, normalization of relations, and aid."[234]

One positive aspect of the Woodcock mission was Hanoi's suggestion that talks take place in Paris without any preconditions. This apparent shift in Hanoi's position was seized upon by President Carter. In a news conference on March 24, he stated:

> They have also suggested, and we have agreed, that we go to Paris to negotiate further without any pre-conditions. In the past, the Vietnamese have said that they would not negotiate with us nor give us additional

> information about the MIA's until we had agreed to pay reparations. They did not bring this up, which I thought was an act of reticence on their part.[235]

However, on the issue of reconstruction aid, the President left no doubt as to the position of his Administration on that issue:

> They had claimed previously that President Nixon had agreed to pay large sums of money to Vietnam because of damage done to their country. Our position had been, whether or not that agreement had been made, that the Vietnamese had violated that agreement by intruding beyond the demilitarized zone during the war.[236]

In order to soften the firm administration stance on the aid issue, President Carter affirmed his desire for normalization:

> If we are convinced, as a result of the Paris negotiations and other actions on the part of the Vietnamese that they are acting in good faith, that they are trying to help us account for our MIA's, then I would aggressively move to...normalize relations with them.[237]

On May 3-4, 1977, talks were held in Paris between Richard C. Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Phan Hien. This first round of talks produced no joint communique, however, a second round of talks was set up for some time in June.

It appears as if the disagreement over how to reach the mutual objective of normalizing relations was narrowed down to three tangible elements:

1. the U.S. insistence on a full accounting (within reason) for MIA's versus the Vietnamese promise that they would try harder.

2. the Vietnamese insistence that the United States fulfill an obligation to contribute to the postwar reconstruction of Vietnam versus the U.S. denial of any legal or moral obligation.

3. the Vietnamese desire for an immediate removal of the U.S. trade embargo versus the U.S. pledge to lift it once embassies were established.[238]

On the first issue, if the United States were convinced of Vietnam's good faith it could be overcome. The third issue could possibly be resolved by an acceptance by the Vietnamese to a few months delay in the lifting of the U.S. trade embargo. The second issue, dealing with reconstruction aid, was the main sticking point, however, an agreement to funnel acceptable amounts of "humanitarian" aid through secondary sources may have possibly broken the deadlock.

Shortly after the May meeting, the House of Representatives voted an amendment to the Foreign Aid Appropriation Bill which prevented th Carter Administration from negotiating "reparation, aid or any other form of payment"[239] to Vietnam. This was followed up by Secretary of State Vance, who reiterated American policy on no reparation aid to Hanoi.

On June 2-3, the second round of talks were held in Paris between Holbrooke and Hien. The Vietnamese negotiator informed Holbrooke that twenty more cases of U.S. remains had been located and were in the process of being recovered, however, due to the issue of reconstruction

aid, no further progress was achieved except an agreement to meet again at a later date.

Later in the month, Congress took yet another step on the issue of reconstruction aid when the House of Representatives voted to formally renounce former President Nixon's offer of $3.25 billion in postwar reconstruction aid. This Congressional action was again followed up by Secretary Vance a few days later when he stated: We have made it very clear that no aid can be forthcoming."[240]

However, a Congressional effort to block aid to Vietnam by prohibiting such institutions as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and others from using U.S. funds for development in Vietnam was defeated. This gave the Carter Administration a certain degree of flexiblility in its efforts towards normalization of relations with Hanoi.

Once this Congressional effort was thwarted, it was revealed that Holbrooke had mentioned to Hein the possibility of U.S. assistance through international agencies. Hien was reported to have encouraged this idea and to have stated: "As to the form of contribution, we are flexible. We are realistic. You can give us money in any way you want. If you think that the figure (promised by President Nixon) is too high, we can discuss."[241]

On December 19, Holbrooke and Hien met again in Paris for the third round of talks on normalization. These talks bore no fruit and it was agreed to meet again at a later date. The Vietnamese also agreed to send a team of experts to America's MIA identification facilities in Hawaii.

The major reasons for the lack of results during the December talks were: (1) it would have been imprudent for the President to expend important political capital on Vietnam while he was pushing for passage of the highly controversial Panama Canal Treaty; (2) working on a possible peace conference on Israel; (3) exploring the normalization of relations with the PRC; and (4) striving towards an arms limitation with the Soviet Union.

As the year 1977 drew to a close, the Vietnamese and American positions on the process for normalization looked like this.

> The Vietnamese apparently wanted to see normalization accomplished in three phases; first, a stepped-up search for American MIA's; second, a U.S. contribution to Vietnamese reconstruction with further efforts to find the missing in action; and third, the establishment of normal diplomatic relations. The United States, by contrast, preferred the establishment of an embassy in Hanoi without conceding a specific level of economic assistance, and with a lifting of the trade embargo following the exchange of ambassadors.[242]

B. THE SECOND YEAR

The second year of the Carter Administration saw the undoing of any chance of the normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam in the near term.

The events that caused this undoing were the worsening of relations between Kampuchea (Cambodia) and Vietnam coupled with a deterioration of relations between the PRC and Vietnam, the refugee exodus from Vietnam, Vietnam's entrance into COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) on June 29, 1978, the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Vietnam of November 3, and the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea on Christmas day. Two other events of significance in the unravelling of the normalization process between the United States and Vietnam took place in early 1979. They were the normalization of relations between Washington and Beijing on January 1, and the Chinese invasion of Vietnam on February 17.

Since the Pol Pot regime came to power in April 1975, it had been at odds with Hanoi. On several occasions his regime had instigated border skirmishes and carried out one major military thrust into Vietnam in October 1977. Three months later, on December 31, Cambodia severed all ties with Vietnam. Vietnam called for a cease-fire and the establishment of a demilitarized zone along the border. This and other calls for a resolution to the crisis went unheeded.

The most likely reason for Cambodia's actions was its support from Beijing which immediately brings up the issue of the deterioration of relations between China and

Vietnam. Many events of 1978 were symptomatic of the hostilites between these two Communist nations, such as the expulsion of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, China's termination of all aid to Vietnam, and the increase in the number of border incidents between them, however, the reality of the deterioration of relations was that,

> China was trying to maintain a Balkanized, superpower--free Southeast Asia as part of its security on the southern flank, and Vietnam had ambitions of emerging as a powerful vanguard nation in the region.[243]

When Vietnam became a member of COMECON in June, this further exacerbated relations between Beijing and Hanoi. For Beijing because it squarely placed the possibility of a Soviet military threat on its southern flank and for Hanoi because of its economic and military needs for a counterbalance to the encircling threat it perceived from China and Kampuchea.

When the Russo-Vietnamese treaty was signed in November, Sino-Vietnamese relations neared the breaking point. To Beijing the treaty was a military alliance directed against China. To Vietnam it was, and still is, a significant counterbalance to the substantial threat it perceives directed against it from its Communist neighbor to the north.

When Vietnam invaded Cambodia on December 25 and captured the capital, Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979, China was forced to react or face international humiliation at the hands of Hanoi.

Shortly after his return from touring the United States, Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Politburo decided to retaliate and on February 17, 1979, China launched an attack against Vietnam.

With this brief historical sketch of 1978 and early 1979 let us now return to the evolution of events between the United States and Vietnam.

In January 1978 the Vietnamese Ambassador to the U.N. was indicted as a coconspirator in an espionage case. The Ambassador was asked to leave the United States and "there was a considerable pause in communications from the Vietnamese."[244] In May the January espionage case was resolved and shortly thereafter Hanoi expressed its willingness to come to Hawaii and tour the MIA idenification facility.

> Following the successful visit in July (to Hawaii), the Vietnamese again began to indicate a desire to meet with U.S. representatives and hinted publicly and to other governments that they might be on the verge of dropping their demand that U.S. economic assistance be part of an agreement to normalize relations.[245]

Faced with the conflict with Cambodia and the growing tension with the PRC, it appears as if Vietnam had decided that diplomatic relations with the United States had become too important to be left to a future date. These two factors coupled with the poor economic developments of 1977 and early 1978, and a genuine desire to diversify its economic dependence, Vietnam "put the ball

in the American court by announcing Hanoi's desire to normalize without preconditions."[246] However, when a Congressional delegation visited Hanoi in August it "was unable to elicit a direct statement that the Vietnamese were no longer demanding an advance commitment on aid."[247]

Also in August, the Hanoi government began allowing American dependents of Vietnamese descent to leave Vietnam for the United States. This move was taken to further pave the way towards normalization.

In September 1978, several rounds of informal talks were held between the United States and Vietnam.

> Initially, the Vietnamese appeared reluctant to abandon their position on aid but eventually stated flatly that they would no longer demand a U.S. commitment on bilateral economic assistance as a quid pro quo for normalization. In addition, the Vietnamese indicated they would continue to make efforts to provide us with an MIA accounting.[248]

After this major concession from Vietnam, Holbrooke and Vietnamese Vice-Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach turned to the practical problems of embassy buildings and other facilities that would be needed for American diplomats in Hanoi.

It was quite obvious now that Vietnam wanted normalization with the United States in order to maintain the regional balance of power in the region. Vietnam certainly feared the threat posed to it from China and in an effort to preclude its total dependence on Russia, Hanoi withdrew the one obstacle that had been at the

heart of the deadlock on the normalization process with the United States. The stage now appeared set for the normalization of relations on January 1, 1979, in conjunction with the US-PRC normalization.[249]

However, in the next two months three significant events occurred that were a precursor to the end of the normalization process in the near term. These three events were the dramatic increase in the refugee exodus, the escalating Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict, and the Russo-Vietnamese treaty.

"We requested that the Vietnamese inform us of their intentions toward Kampuchea...We also asked for clarification of the implications of the...SRV-Soviet Treaty...," and "we expressed deep concern over the growing refugee exodus from Vietnam."[250]

The Vietnamese felt that these American questions were being raised "before allowing normalization" in order to extract further concessions from Hanoi.[251] On the American side, the Administration was displeased with Hanoi's responses and in this light "movement toward normalization came to a halt as we awaited further developments."[252]

On December 25, Vietnam invaded Kampuchea and installed a puppet regime in Phnom Penh.

The Carter White House repeatedly called on Hanoi to withdraw its troops, seeking the establishment of a

neutral regime in Kampuchea. These and other calls, both from the U.S. and the international community, went unheeded. Thus, "our caution in not moving further (towards normalization) last fall was justified."[253]

C. THE FINAL TWO YEARS

Since the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, America's position on the normalization of relations with Vietnam has been the withdrawal of its combat forces from Kampuchea and a change in its policy which is generating a large number of refugees.

When the U.S. trade embargo on Vietnam came up for review in 1979, President Carter renewed it as a signal to Hanoi that at present normalization was out of the question.

In June 1979, Hanoi made an overture on the Kampuchean issue in an effort to get a resumption of the steps towards normalization. This overture stipulated that Vietnam would withdraw its forces from Kampuchea and establish a coalition government, even with Prince Norodom Sihanouk at its head, provided "that the steering of the government would...remain essentially in the hands of the Communist Party of Kampuchea."[254]

To many Western leaders this overture was seen merely as another Vietnamese maneuver. A senior Western diplomat stated "They keep making vague proposals and flying trial balloons to create confusion but they have

shown no indication of abandoning their desire to dominate Indochina."[255] This statement seemed to reflect Washington's view of the situation in Indochina.

The only other significant event in US-Vietnamese relations in 1979, was the visit of three Congressional delegations to Hanoi. These delegations were urged by the Vietnamese to seek normalization of relations but in each instance the delegations called on Hanoi to first resolve the Kampuchean and refugee issues.

In April 1980, Assistant Secretary Holbrooke stated the Administration's view on Indochina in an address before the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. He stated:

> ...the greatest single threat to peace in East Asia in the 1980's still remains the unresolved situation in Indochina....The root cause of this situation remains Vietnamese actions: First, Hanoi's long-standing dream of dominating all of Indochina; second, their increasing dependence on the Soviet Union and the growing Soviet use of Vietnamese territory as a strategic foothold in Southeast Asia...; Third, the continuing Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea, and the creation of the refugees along the Thai border; Fourth, the threat that the Vietnamese hold over their neighbors that they will unleash a new wave of boat refugees.[256]

Later in this address, Holbrooke held out an olive branch to the Vietnamese for future relations with the United States. He noted that "if they choose the path of cooperation (in resolving the Indochina crisis), then the ASEAN countries, Japan, the United States, and other nations are ready to work with them in a peaceful forward-looking Southeast Asia," however, he cautioned

that "we are not interested in producing a negotiated acceptance of the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea."[257]

In June of 1980, Hanoi took a further step away from seeking a resolution to the Indochina crisis and thus getting the normalization process with the United States back on track when Vietnamese troops crossed into Thai territory after suspected pockets of Kampuchean resistance forces. The Carter Administration reacted to this Vietnamese action by stating "The United States strongly condemns Vietnam's military attack on Thai territory beginning June 23,"[258] and by stepping-up deliveries of military equipment to the Bangkok government.

In October, Hanoi allowed two American officials to travel to Vietnam to discuss MIA's. However, Hanoi stated very clearly "that so long as the U.S. continued to play the China card little progress could be expected on finding MIA's in Vietnam."[259]

In the same month, the United States successfully opposed Moscow's and Hanoi's attempt to seat the puppet regime of Heng Samrin in the UN in place of the Pol Pot government.

As the Carter Administration drew to a close, the normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam was further away than it had been on the day that Jimmy Carter had entered the White House.

D. CONCLUSIONS

When President Carter came into office he faced the same four issues that his predecessor had faced after April 30, 1975. One of these issues, Vietnam's admittance to the UN, was resolved early on.

During the first year in office, the Carter Administration moved methodically on the other three issues, the MIA's normalization of relations, and reconstruction aid, culminating in what appeared to be a final solution.

The United States got everything it sought from Vietnam. Hanoi finally agreed to continue its efforts in searching for MIA's and dropped its insistence on some form of aid prior to recognition. In spite of this, normalization did not take place as the long process of negotiations was overtaken by events.

Many people have blamed the Carter Administration for the failure to achieve normalized relations with Vietnam. On some counts there is a degree of truth in the matter. When the Congressional attempt to block aid to Vietnam through international institutions was narrowly defeated, an opportunity to work out a deal was lost. However, part of the reason for the missed opportunity was other international interests of the Administration, such as the Panama Canal Treaty, the evolving Middle East peace process, US-PRC relations, and the SALT II process, which

at that point in time were of greater importance to the President.

Major domestic considerations at the time were adverse public opinion and the upcoming Congressional elections the following fall.

In mid-1978, when Vietnam appeared on the verge of lifting its demand for reconstruction aid, another opportunity was lost. The Administration could have used three methods to entice Vietnam. The first could have been the offer of "humanitarian" aid channeled through international institutions, the second could have been a partial lifting of the American embargo on Vietnam, or a combination of the two. However, the U.S. wanted a cut and dried yes or no from Vietnam on its position on the linkage of the aid issue to normalization.

By the time Vietnam gave its response in September 1978, international events were about to overtake the normalization process.

From at least mid-1978 on, the Hanoi regime was desperately seeking normalization with the United States. Vietnam hoped to be able to balance Soviet influence with that of the United States and in turn work with both of these nations against its number one threat: the PRC.

The slowness of the American response coupled with Vietnam's increasingly serious rift with China left Hanoi with only one option: a complete and total move into the Soviet camp.

The reasons for the failure to reach normalization, according to Washington, were Vietnam's military build-up along its border with Kampuchea, the increasing tempo of refugees, and Hanoi's treaty with the Soviet Union. However, by this time US-PRC relations were very close to a complete normalization which may well have caused what appeared to be a delay in Washington's reaction to Hanoi's initiative. This factor, if true, proved to be the undoing of the normalization process between Hanoi and Washington.

After Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea the normalization process was back at square one. The United States took the position that Hanoi had to remove its troops from Kampuchea, and the establishment of a sovereign coalition government and resolve the refugee problem before the normalization process could be resumed. Vietnam on the other hand took the position that no further progress on the MIA question could be expected as long as the United States played the China card.

Thus, when President Carter left office in January 1981, the situation in Indochina was the worst it had been since the fall of Saigon.

In turning to our national interest matrix, the Carter Administration outlook on Vietnam would probably look like Chart 8.1 on the following page.

Chart 8.1
NATIONAL INTEREST MATRIX-CARTER

Country: U.S.	Issue: Vietnam			
Basic Interest at Stake	Intensity of Interest			
	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of homeland				X
Economic well-being				X
Favorable world order			X	
Ideological				X

To President Carter, the stability of Southeast Asia was a major interest. In order to satisfy this interest he sought to normalize relations with Vietnam within the constraints of Congressional legislation and public opinion.

The Administration recognized the importance of normalization. In a news conference Secretary Vance noted that "we believe in a return toward normalization of relations between Vietnam and the United States is in the interest of both countries..."[260] In the interest of the United States as a measure of influence in the stability of the entire region, and in the interest of Vietnam as a way to "balance their freindship with us with their friendship with the Soviet Union."[261]

Had the United States and Vietnam pursued the normalization process a little bit more aggressively, it is possible that the events of late 1978 and early 1979, the

Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea and the subsequent Chinese attack against Vietnam, may have been averted.

IX. A STRATEGY FOR INDOCHINA

A. THE OBJECTIVES

The climax of this study is to set forth a strategy based on the political, economic and military needs of all the regional actors: the United States, Vietnam, China, ASEAN (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Republic of the Philippines), Japan, and the Soviet Union.

In order to do this it seems appropriate to examine the interests of these nations vis-a-vis Indochina in order to add depth and perspective to those interests which will condition the policies of both the US and Vietnam.

In conclusion a strategy will be proposed which takes into account the interests of the regional actors. It will cite the objectives of all the actors and a means to resolve the outstanding issues leading to regional peace and stability.

For the United States, the primary objective is to counter Soviet military presence in the states of Indochina (SRV, Laos, and Kampuchea) and to diminish Russian political and economic influence. A corollary objective of the United States to the minimization of Soviet military influence in the region is the development of regional stability. According to Richard Holbrooke,

> We have explored with all how we might proceed toward a political settlement which at a minimum would promote the key goals of the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea, the emergence of a genuinely independent and neutral Kampuchea at peace with its neighbors and with a government which represents its people and respects their rights, and the return to regional stability and balance by the elimination of the Soviet military intrusion in the region.[262]

The third objective of the United States vis-a-vis the region is the economic development of all of Southeast Asia for the benefit, not only of the American economic sector, but also for the economies of the region.

For the SRV, the primary objective is to have and maintain a relationship or a group of relationships as a counterweight to the primary threat: the PRC. As is well known, at present the SRV has a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union. It is believed that, given the right set of circumstances, the SRV would opt for a different set of relationships which involved the United States, Japan, ASEAN, and Western Europe as a counterweight to the Chinese threat, with the long term goal of diminishing the present total reliance on the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc nations. In addition this would permit the SRV flexibility to play the USSR and the PRC off against one another.

Another objective of the SRV is to consolidate its sphere of influence in Indochina. A sphere of influence is a term which has a wide spectrum going from the satellization of Kampuchea and Laos to a sovereign Kampuchea and

Laos that are subject to Vietnamese influence in foreign policy matters affecting the security of the SRV (Finlandization).

A third objective the SRV seeks deals with its relations with the PRC. It entails the resolution of the differences betwen these two nations in areas such as territorial disputes, the overseas Chinese issue, and China's recognition of the SRV's form of communist revolution (ideology as a function of the legitimacy issue). Vietnam also seeks tacit recognition of its influence in Laos and Kampuchea.

The final objective of Vietnam is the economic reconstruction and development of its country through the support of the West and various international organizations. It should be recognized that the SRV cannot and will not give up its autonomy for assistance. Herein lies the greatest weakness of the Soviet Union and potentially the greatest strength of the United States, ASEAN, the West and Japan.

For the PRC, the major objective is to remove all Soviet influence from the region. In terms of Indochina, the PRC seeks to preclude any one state from dominating all of that region and in reference to military alliances and basing rights within the three Indochinese nations, Zhou Enlai once stated,

> We note that...the three states of Indochina will refrain from joining any military alliance, and that

> the establishment of military bases on their perspective territories by any foreign country will not be allowed.[263]

All of the above objectives reflect China's goal of a "Balkanized superpower-free Southeast Asia as part of its security on the southern flank."[264]

Other objectives of the PRC include the normalization of relations with those ASEAN states with which it does not have such relations, Indonesia, and Singapore, and the economic development of its vast territory along the line of its "Four Modernizations."

As for the nations of ASEAN, their primary objective in the region entails stability based on the principle of ZOPFAN (Zone of Peace Friendship and Neutrality). They seek to remove the Russian presence from the region, increase American influence as a counterweight to the PRC, and incorporate Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea into ZOPFAN which in turn will hopefully end Vietnamese exportation of revolutionary support to the communist parties in the region.

The second major objective of ASEAN falls under the heading of economic development. They seek expanded economic assistance for development from Japan, the United States, and Western Europe. Furthermore, they seek expanded economic ties between the PRC and ASEAN, the Indochinese states and ASEAN and the PRC and Indochinese

states. One area of economic concern for ASEAN is its competition and balance of payments deficit with the PRC.

A corollary objective of the first two is the resolution of the refugee problems within the region which, if the first two objectives could be achieved, would in all likelihood be resolved.

For the Japanese, the primary objective is in fact a combination of its three main objectives in the region. They are the removal of Soviet presence in Southeast Asia, the ability to secure sources of raw materials for their industrial base, and the development of regional peace and stability by the resolution of the Indochinese conflict. The conclusion of the three interrelated objectives would then give Japan the opportunity to play a large economic role in the region as a benefit, not only to the Japanese nation, but also to the nations comprising the Southeast Asian region.

Soviet objectives in the region include the maintenance of its foothold in Southeast Asia in order to: (1) pose a threat to China's southern flank; (2) counterbalance U.S. presence in the region; (3) in conjunction with its military buildup in Northeast Asia, be in a position to threaten Japan's access to raw materials in order to attempt to isolate the Japanese nation in the event of hostilities; and (4) to exert pressure on ASEAN resulting in effects on their position in the Sino/Soviet split,

US-USSR competition, their relations with Japan, and possibly their stance on issues in the United Nations.

Russia's position in Southeast Asia must also be looked at in terms not only of the Sino/Soviet rivalry but also in terms of Moscow's goal of worldwide influence.

Having looked at the objectives, there is the commonality of views between the United States, the PRC, ASEAN, and Japan that: (1) the Soviet influence in the region must not become preponderant; (2) economic development is essential; and (3) peace and stability in the region is necessary.

Certain commonalities also exist between the SRV and the above nations. These are: (1) economic development; and (2) regional peace and stability. Of course for Vietnam, regional peace and stability requires a form of security that stands opposed to the PRC and Hanoi also wants to maintain its influence in Laos and Kampuchea.

On the other hand, unlike the numerous common interests of the other nations in the region, the Soviet Union almost stands alone in terms of its lack of common interests in the region. Moscow is seeking to maintain or increase its influence in the region in terms of the Sino/Soviet conflict and in terms of its worldwide goals. The Soviet Union does not wish to see the evolution of a region of peace and stability because it does not serve Moscow's purposes.

B. THE PLAN

The plan for Southeast Asia envisions the withdrawal of Vietnamese military forces from Kampuchea with a mutual easing of tensions between the PRC and the SRV and the establishment of a coalition government in Phnom Penh. It also reflects the need for the economic integration of sovereign Indochinese states into a regional economic order with ASEAN and China with economic support from Japan and the West.

The withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea, the easing of SRV-PRC tensions, and the establishment of a coalition government in Phnom Penh must occur more or less simultaneously.

The coalition government will have a nominal head in the person of Prince Norodom Sihanouk and will consist of three major elements: the Khmer Serai (non-communist Kampuchean elements), the Khmer Rouge (communist elements of the Pol Pot regime), and elements of the present Heng Samrin government which will "ensure a degree of Kampuchean independence vis-a-vis the Vietnamese."[265]

One recognizable aspect of a Kampuchean state is that it will have to demonstrate a certain degree of deference to the Hanoi government on issues which affect the security of Vietnam. An example of the kind of issue inferred would be Kampuchea's relationship with the PRC. The deference perceived in Kampuchea-Vietnamese relations

is that similar to Russo-Finish relations. This could be formalized by a Peace, Friendship, and Non-Aggression treaty that agrees to 'consultations on issues affecting the region' and 'is not directed against any other nation.'

The easing of tensions between Hanoi and Beijing is an important aspect of the overall plan. That this fact is an important point was clearly stated recently by an Indonesian official:

> Our concern is that the continued conflict between ASEAN and Hanoi and the Chinese threat are going to make Vietnam more and more dependent on Moscow....I would like to see Vietnam develop into a Yugoslavia. I am sure they (the Vietnamese) would become one if they are given an alternative source of support.[266]

The effort to ease tensions between the PRC and the SRV should result after the opening of a series of bi-lateral talks dealing with the entire region. The common goal of these two nations should be the decrease of Soviet influence in the region, although for different reasons. For the Chinese as an effort to safeguard their southern flank from the Russian threat and for the Vietnamese as a means towards detaching itself from total dependence on the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. This is important to the SRV so that it does not eventually have to give in unconditionally to Soviet demands as Cuba eventually did.

However, for Vietnam this will necessitate the normalization of relations with the United States and Western Europe and the improvement in relations with the Japanese

in order to have a viable alternative to its security and economic needs.

During these series of bi-lateral talks, the formation of the coalition government should be resolved with the acceptance by all sides that countrywide elections be held under the auspices of the regional nations or some other body agreeable to all sides.

The issue of economic integration of the Indochinese nations into some mutually agreeable form with ASEAN and China should be resolved.

Economic integration should be resolved on three levels: First, within Indochina itself to resolve transportation problems, water resource problems, development of the Mekong River project, rice to market problems, and so on. The aid for this level should come from various national and international sources in order to present mutli-national overtones, and should be directed into an Indochinese Development Project.

Second, as the Indochinese Development Project gets off the ground, a multi-lateral approach between it and ASEAN should be developed. Again in this instance multi-national aid should be sought to preclude charges of single nation influence. This level would be a natural spinoff from the first level due to ASEAN's proximity to Indochina, as a counterbalance to the PRC, and because of the mutual benefits which could be derived such as food from Indochina for manufactured goods from ASEAN.

Third, with the inclusion of the PRC. This level would be more along the lines of trade rather than integration although in the long term could result in integration along the lines of OPTAD (Organization for Pacific Trade and Development).

During the first level and second level of economic integration, the United States, Japan, and Western Europe should be kept apprized and should make whatever reasonable contributions necessary for the successful conclusion of this part of the bi-lateral talks.

Thus, we have a series of bi-lateral talks that progressively propose the resolution of the Indochinese conflict by the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea, the easing of PRC-SRV tensions, the establishment of a coalition government in Phnom Penh, and the economic integration of the regional actors.

C. THE IMPLEMENTATION

One of the primary prerequisites of the plan is that it be carried out with as little publicity as possible. It must not become an overt issue in the Sino/Soviet split nor should it become an issue in US-USSR competition or be presented in terms that appear as overt US-PRC competition. If any of the three eventualities should materialize then the plan will ultimately fail to bear fruit.

To get Japan into a more assertive and independent foreign policy role, the Japanese, keeping the US informed,

should conduct continuous consultations with the Chinese at every level to work out an agenda.

This is to be followed up by Japanese discussions with Hanoi on an agenda in an effort to produce a format acceptable to both China and the SRV.

A short time later a spokesman for ASEAN would proceed to Tokyo to present those agenda items of major concern to these nations. ASEAN must be perceived as acting independently of US influence which will strengthen the position of this regional body vis-a-vis not only the US but also the USSR, the PRC, and the Third World non-aligned movement.

Once these steps have been carefully carried out, intermediaries consisting perhaps of Burma, Yugoslavia, and Australia would work behind the scenes to develop an agreement that resolves the majority of the issues for all nations concerned.

Some indicative gestures from the SRV, the PRC, the United States, Japan, and ASEAN would be made to demonstrate intent. The SRV could decrease the flow of refugees, withdraw some of its forces from the Thai-Kampuchean border, and issue a favorable message on any given number of Chinese events.

The PRC could tone down its ideological attacks on the SRV, pull some of its forces back from the Sino-Vietnamese border, agree to a genuine change of leadership in the

Khmer Rouge, and issue a positive message on the anniversary of the Lao Dong Party (the SRV's communist party), which implies recognition of the legitimacy of Vietnam's form of communist revolution.

As Vietnam began to decrease the flow of refugees and through its withdrawal of its troops from the Thai-Kampuchean border, the United States, based on an SRV initiative, could then agree to initiate secret bi-lateral talks at an agreeable location with the ultimate goal of normalizing relations with the SRV.

Inherent problems in this discourse would be the MIA issue and possibly a renewed SRV demand for economic aid. A Vietnamese gesture of returning the remains of any MIA's coupled with an agreement by the United States to favor some form of aid through international organizations could go a long way towards resolving these issues.

The greatest gesture Japan could make during this period would be to agree to provide a nominal amount of aid to Vietnam with the concurrence of Washington.

During this timeframe, the nations of ASEAN could privately signal a recognition of Vietnam's security requirements in Indochina through the Burmese intermediaries, Indonesia and Singapore could normalize relations with the PRC, and these nations could propose long term economic ties between themselves and the states of Indochina. The ties could be of mutual benefit with the

rice basket of Southeast Asia producing food in exchange for light technology items and technical assistance in light industry.

Once these gestures are set in motion, and the intermediaries have worked out most of the problems of the agreed agenda, a regional conference could be held in Rangoon.

Out of the conference would come the formalization of the agenda worked out by the intermediaries resulting in Vietnam's withdrawal of its forces from Kampuchea and a coalition government that is acceptable to both Hanoi and Beijing. This coalition government would need to demonstrate a correct deference to the security requirements of the SRV. China would have to tacitly recognize Vietnam's sphere of influence, as described earlier, in the Indochina area and Vietnam would likewise need to tacitly recognize China's security needs on its southern flank. The improvement of relations between the PRC and the SRV through the resolution of their border dispute and the ethnic Chinese issue would also result.

Economic relations would be established linking the regional actors in a drive towards modernization and most importantly the decrease of Soviet influence in the region would result.

As the conference is nearing a successful conclusion, the United States and the SRV would then normalize

relations culminating in a basis for regional peace and stability.

Undoubtedly this whole process is in the American national interest. By diminishing the Soviet influence and decreasing the Russian military threat to this geostrategically important region, the United States and all the regional actors protect their interests in a region where hostilities are diminished and the Soviet presence is undermined.

APPENDIX A

JOINT RESOLUTION, U.S. CONGRESS
["Tonkin Gulf Resolution"] August 7, 1964

TO PROMOTE THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

Whereas naval units of the Communist regime in Vietnam, in violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law, have deliberately and repeatedly attacked United States naval vessels lawfully present in international waters, and have thereby created a serious threat to international peace; and

Whereas these attacks are part of a deliberate and systematic campaign of aggression that the Communist regime in North Vietnam has been waging against its neighbors and the nations joined with them in the collective defense of their freedom; and

Whereas the United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protect their freedom and has no territorial, military or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these peoples should be left in peace to work out their destinies in their own way: Now, therefore, be it Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.

SEC. 2. The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

SEC. 3. This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress.

APPENDIX B

THE PACIFIC DOCTRINE

Address by President Ford at the East-West Center, Honolulu, at the conclusion of his Pacific journey, December 7, 1975.

...It is good to be home again in the United States. I have just completed, as many of you know, a 7-day trip to the State of Alaska, to the People's Republic of China, to our good friends, Indonesia and the Philippines, and now I am obviously happy to be home in our 50th State, Hawaii.

This morning I reflected on the past at the shrine of Americans who died on Sunday morning 34 years ago. I came away with a new spirit of dedication to the ideals that emerged from Pearl Harbor in World War II--dedication to America's bipartisan policy of pursuing peace through strength and dedication to a new future of interdependence and cooperation with all peoples of the Pacific.

I subscribe to a Pacific doctrine of peace with all and hostility towards none. The way I would like to remember or recollect Pearl Harbor is by preserving the power of the past to build the future. Let us join with new and old countries of that great Pacific area in creating the greatest civilization on the shores of the greatest of our oceans.

My visit here to the East-West Center holds another kind of meaning. Your center is a catalyst of America's

positive concern for Asia, its people and its rich diversity of cultures. You advance our hope that Asia will gain a better understanding of the United States.

Last year we were pleased to receive and to welcome nearly 54,000 Asian students to the United States while thousands upon thousands of American students went to Asian countries. I applaud your contribution to partnership in education. Your efforts represent America's vision of an open world of understanding, freedom, and peace.

In Hawaii, the crossroads of the Pacific, our past and our future join.

I was deeply moved when I visited Japan last year and when I recently had the honor of welcoming the Emperor and the Empress of Japan to America. The gracious welcome that I received and the warmth of the welcome the American people bestowed upon the Emperor and the Empress testify to a growing friendship and partnership between our two great countries. This is a tribute to what is best in man--his capacity to grow from fear to trust and from a tragedy of the past to a hopeful future. It is a superb example of what can be achieved in human progress. It inspires our new efforts in Asia to improve relations.

America, a nation of the Pacific Basin, has a very vital stake in Asia and a responsibility to take a leading part in lessening tensions, preventing hostilities, and

preserving peace. World stability and our own security depend upon our Asian commitments.

In 1941, 34 years ago today, we were militarily unprepared. Our trade in the Pacific was very limited. We exercised jurisdiction over the Philippines. We were preoccupied with Western Europe. Our instincts were isolationist.

We have transcended that age. We are now the world's strongest nation. Our great commercial involvement in Asia is expanding. We led the way in conferring independence upon the Philippines. Now we are working out new associations and arrangements with the trust territories of the Pacific.

The center of political power in the United States has shifted westward. Our Pacific interests and concerns have increased. We have exchanged the freedom of actions of an isolationist state for the responsibilities of a great global power. As I return from this trip to three major Asian countries, I am even more aware of our interests in this part of the world.

The security concerns of great world powers intersect in Asia. The United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Japan are all Pacific powers. Western Europe has historic and economic ties with Asia. Equilibrium in the Pacific is absolutely essential to the United States and to the other countries in the Pacific.

The first premise of a new Pacific Doctrine is that American strength is basic to any stable balance of power in the Pacific. We must reach beyond our concern for security. But without security, there can be neither peace nor progress. The preservation of the sovereignty and the independence of our Asian friends and allies remain a paramount objective of American policy.

We recognize that force alone is insufficient to assure security. Popular legitimacy and social justice are vital prerequisites of resistance against subversion or aggression. Nevertheless, we owe it to ourselves and to those whose independence depends upon our continued support to preserve a flexible and balanced position of strength throughout the Pacific.

The second basic premise of a new Pacific Doctrine is that partnership with Japan is a pillar of our strategy. There is not relationship to which I have devoted more attention, nor is there any greater success story in the history of American efforts to relate to distant cultures and to people. The Japanese-American relationship can be a source of great, great pride to every American and to every Japanese. Our bilateral relations have never been better. The recent exchange of visits symbolized a basic political partnership. We have begun to develop with the Japanese and other advanced industrial democracies better means of harmonizing our economic policy. We are joining

with Japan, our European friends, and representatives of the developing nations this month to begin shaping a more efficient and more equitable pattern of North-South economic relations.

The third premise of a new Pacific Doctrine is the normalization of relations with the People's Republic of China, the strengthening of our new ties with this great nation representing nearly one-quarter of mankind. This is another recent achievement of American foreign policy. It transcends 25 years of hostility.

I visited China to build on the dialogue started nearly 4 years ago. My wide-ranging exchanges with the leaders of the People's Republic of China--with Chairman Mao Zedong and Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping--enhanced our understanding of each other's views and each other's policies.

There were, as expected, differences of perspective. Our societies, our philosophies, our varying positions in the world give us differing perceptions of our respective national interests.

But we did find a common ground. We reaffirmed that we share very important areas of concern and agreement. They say and we say that the countries of Asia should be free to develop in a world where there is mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states; where people are free from the threat of foreign aggression; where there is noninterference in the internal affairs of others; and where the principles of equality, mutual

benefit, and coexistence shape the development of peaceful international order. We share opposition to any form of hegemony in Asia or in any other part of the world.

I reaffirmed the determination of the United States to complete the normalization of relations with the People's Republic of China on the basis of the Shanghai communique. Both sides regarded our discussion as significant, useful, and constructive. Our relationship is becoming a permanent feature of the international political landscape. It benefits not only our two peoples but all peoples of the region and the entire world.

A fourth principle of our Pacific policy is our continuing stake in stability and security in Southeast Asia.

After leaving China, I visited Indonesia and the Philippines. Indonesia is a nation of 140 million people, the fifth largest population in the world today. It is one of our important new friends and a major country in that area of the world. The Republic of the Philippines is one of our oldest and dearest allies. Our friendship demonstrates America's longstanding interest in Asia.

I spent 3 days in Djakarta and Manila. I would have liked to have had time to visit our friends in Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia. We share important political and economic concerns with these five nations who make up the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

I can assure you that Americans will be hearing much more about the ASEAN organization. All of its members are friends of the United States. Their total population equals our own. While they are developing countries, they possess many, many assets--vital peoples, abundant natural resources, and well-managed agricultures. They have skilled leaders and the determination to develop themselves and to solve their own problems.

Each of these countries protects its independence by relying on its own national resilience and diplomacy. We must continue to assist them. I learned during my visit that our friends want us to remain actively engaged in the affairs of the region. We intend to do so.

We retain close and valuable ties with our old friends and allies in the Southwest Pacific--Australia on the one hand and New Zealand on the other.

A fifth tenet of our new Pacific policy is our belief that peace in Asia depends upon a resolution of outstanding political conflicts. In Korea, tension persists. We have close ties with the Republic of Korea. And we remain committed to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, as the presence of our forces there attests.

Responding to the heightened tension last spring, we reaffirmed our support of the Republic of Korea. Today, the United States is ready to consider constructive ways of easing tensions on the peninsula. But we will continue to

resist any moves which attempt to exclude the Republic of Korea from discussion of its own future.

In Indochina, the healing effects of time are required. Our policies toward the new regimes of the peninsula will be determined by their conduct toward us. We are prepared to reciprocate gestures of good will--particularly the return of remains of Americans killed or missing in action or information about them. If they exhibit restraint toward their neighbors and constructive approaches to international problems, we will look to the future rather than to the past.

The sixth point of our new policy in the Pacific is that peace in Asia requires a structure of economic cooperation reflecting the aspiration of all the peoples in the region.

The Asian-Pacific economy has recently achieved more rapid growth than any other region in the world. Our trade with East Asia now exceeds our transactions with the European community. America's jobs, currency, and raw materials depend upon economic ties with the Pacific Basin. Our trade with the region is now increasing by more than 30 percent annually, reaching some $46 billion last year. Our economies are increasingly interdependent as cooperation grows between developed and developing nations.

Our relations with the five ASEAN countries are marked by growing maturity and by more modest and more realistic expectations on both sides. We no longer approach them as donor to dependent. These proud people look to us less for

outright aid than for new trading opportunities and more equitable arrangements for the transfer of science and technology.

There is one common theme which was expressed to me by the leaders of every Asian country that I visited. They all advocate the continuity of steady and responsible American leadership. They seek self-reliance in their own future and in their own relations with us.

Our military assistance to allies and friends is a modest responsibility, but its political significance far surpasses the small cost involved. We serve our highest national interests by strengthening their self-reliance, their relations with us, their solidarity with each other, and their regional security.

I emphasized to every leader I met that the United States is a Pacific nation. I pledged, as President, I will continue America's active concern for Asia and our presence in the Asian-Pacific region.

Asia is entering a new era. We can contribute to a new structure of stability founded on a balance among the major powers, strong ties to our allies in the region, and easing of tension between adversaries, the self-reliance and regional solidarity of smaller nations, and expanding economic ties and cultural exchanges. These components of peace are already evident. Our foreign policy in recent years and in recent days encourages their growth.

If we can remain steadfast, historians will look back and view the 1970s as the beginning of a period of peaceful cooperation and progress, a time of growing community for all the nations touched by this great ocean.

Here in the Pacific crossroads of Hawaii, we envision hope for a wider community of man. We see the promise of a unique republic which includes all the world's races. No other country has been so truly a free, multiracial society.

America's Pacific heritage emerged from this remarkable State. I am proud to visit Hawaii--the island star in the American firmament which radiates the universal magic of Aloha.

Let there flow from Hawaii--and from all of the States in our Union--to all peoples, East and West, a new spirit of interchange to build human brotherhood.

Thank you very much.

APPENDIX C

FROM BREAKTHROUGH TO BREAKDOWN: A CHRONOLOGY

1972

October 17	Kissinger, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William Sullivan, and State Department Legal Advisor George Aldrich return to Paris to meet with Xuan Thuy. Le Duc Tho is in Hanoi.
October 20	Nixon informs Hanoi that the draft agreement is acceptable to the U.S.
October 19-23	Kissinger and Sullivan visit Saigon: five meetings are held with Thieu.
October 24	Thieu briefs political party and government officials on the objectionable provisions of the draft agreement.
October 25	Hanoi radio broadcasts details of the draft agreement.
	GVN Senate votes to reject a tripartite government of national concord as part of an overall settlement. Similar action is taken in the lower house on October 27, 1972.
October 26	Kissinger declares peace is at hand, explaining that one more negotiating session with Hanoi is required.
October 27	DRV releases additional details about the negotiating process, contradicting Kissinger's account, and accusing the U.S. of reneging on its pledge to sign the agreement.
November 7	Nixon reelected.
November 9-10	General Alexander Haig visits Saigon to reassure Thieu of full U.S. support and to secure GVN support of the agreement.

November 15	Saigon proposes that additional negotiation tracks be created so it could deal directly with the PRG.
November 20-25	Kissinger-Tho talks resume.
November 25	Le Duc Tho returns to Hanoi.
November 29-December 1	Nixon meets with Thieu's personal emissary, Nguyen Phu Duc.
November 30	The JCS approve the terms of the draft agreement.
December 4-13	Kissinger-Tho talks resume: experts held technical talks on the protocols December 10-12
December 15	Technical talks resume.
December 15-16	Le Duc Tho visits Peking.
December 16	Kissinger reviews the status of the negotiations: the "agreement is 99 percent completed."
December 17-18	Le Duc Tho visits Peking.
December 18-30	Linebacker 2: the Christmas bombing of Hanoi.
December 19-20	General Haig visits Indochina and Thailand to win support for the draft agreement and to begin discussions on what U.S. aviation will remain in Southeast Asia.
December 23	Technical talks adjourned by DRV representatives protesting the Christmas bombing.
December 24	Xuan Thuy (on ABC's "Issues and Answers") declares DRV will not resume talks until air strikes north of twentieth parallel are halted.
December 27	Technical talks scheduled for this date called off by DRV in protest.

December 30	Linebacker 2 ended with announcement that technical talks would resume on January 2, 1973.
1973	
January 2-5	Technical talks between Sullivan and DRV Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Co. Thach.
January 6	Le Duc Tho returns to Paris.
January 8-10	Technical talks resume.
January 8-13	Kissinger-Tho talks resume.
January 13	Negotiations are concluded.
January 15	Bombing of North Vietnam completely halted.
January 13-20	General Haig briefs allies in Indochina and Asia on the agreement.
January 23	Kissinger and Tho initial agreement.

FOOTNOTES

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[40]Kenny, p. 77.

[41]The Pentagon Papers, I, p. 118.

[42]Quoted in Zant, pp. 140-141.

[43]Kahin and Lewis, p. 45.

[44]Quoted in Poole, p. 34.

[45]The Pentagon Papers, I, p. 571.

[46]For the entire text of the Geneva Agreement, see Kahin and Lewis, pp. 348-376.

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[173]Goodman, p. 114.

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[181]Ibid., p. 133.

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[216]Zasloff and Brown, p. 10.

[217]DOSB, vol. LXXII No. 1874, 26 May 1975, p. 667.

[218]DOSB, vol. LXXIV No. 1925, 17 May 1976, pp. 623-624. My emphasis. Note hardened US position.

[219]DOSB, vol. LXXV No. 1938, 16 August 1976, p. 224.

[220]DOSB, vol. LXXV No. 1945, 4 October 1976, p. 418. My emphasis. All Hanoi gestures included a requirement for some form of aid.

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[229]DOSB, vol. LXXVI No. 1978, 23 May 1977, p. 515.

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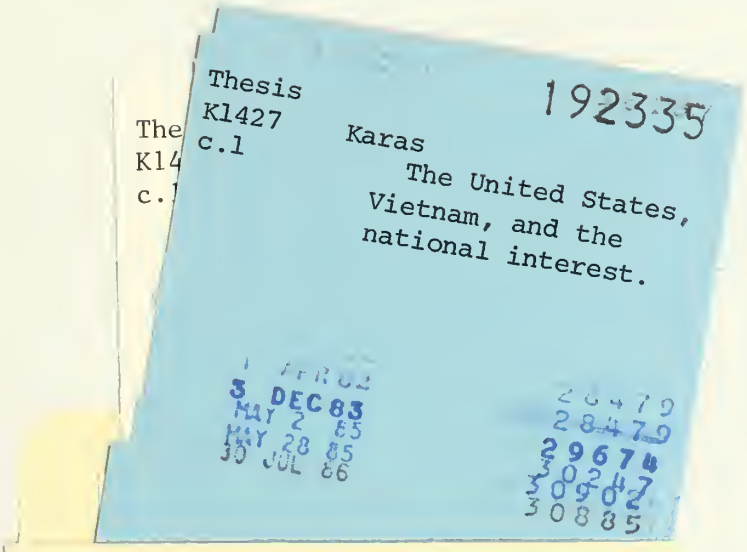
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